

THE EYE SHIELD



Issue 52

July 2008

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MESSAGE FROM ME

Welcome to issue 52 of The Eye Shield. Happily and incredibly, this is the longest issue so far, containing more Knightmare delights for you to gorge yourselves on than I'm sure is strictly healthy. However, I urge you to take the risk and get reading! Of course I cannot claim sole credit for creating such a mammoth issue; there are several readers to whom I am indebted for their excellent and varied contributions, and I shall be extending a grateful pat on the back to all of them at the end of this section.

Don't forget to make a regular date in your diaries, readers - on the first day of every second month, go to the TES section of the Knightmare Discussion Forum and click on the topic devoted to the new issue, which will contain a link to the front page. You don't have to be a forum member to find and use the link, remember - it'll be in the dedicated TES section, just waiting within the brand new post for the brand new issue.

Also, don't forget to check out The Eye Shield's sister fanzine, Ross Thompson's The Raven's Eye, at www.freewebs.com/ravenseyemag on the first day of every single month, for the latest Raven news, reviews and special features. Coming up this month is a first-hand insight into the world of The Secret Temple, as well as an epic new competition that I myself shall be helping to judge. Remember, if you're a fan of Raven, The Raven's Eye is for you!

Do you ever find yourself wondering just which issue of TES contains a *Remember Him?* about your favourite character, or a *Creature Feature* about your all-time favourite monster? If so, The Eye Shield Index can help. Nestled comfortably within the TES section of the forum, this comprehensive list of references tells you exactly where to look for all your Knightmare character, creature, puzzle and team needs.

Now then, let's take a look at what's coming up in this issue - there sure is a lot of it! In the section entitled *Alan Boyd Interview*, I interview Alan Boyd. I'm sure you don't need me to tell you that Alan was a member of the penultimate team ever to take up the Knightmare challenge, which was of course that of Dunstan. For a fascinating insight into the mind of someone who knows what it feels like both to appear on and to win Knightmare (and to deal with the consequences for thirteen years afterwards) you need look no further. Thanks again for your time and

cooperation, Alan.

In *The Audio Play's the Thing*, I share with you some of my thoughts about the two Knightmare audio plays, before settling down for a fireside chat with the man responsible for bringing these two aural treats into being, Martin "HStorm" Odoni. My thanks to you, Martin, for suggesting this article, and for your contributions to it. Readers, if you haven't listened to the audio plays yet, hopefully this article will inspire you to do so - they really are very good.

Kids' TV Shows I Grew Up With is once again in the hands of Rosey Collins, who is going to share with you over the next three issues some more golden memories of her favourite children's shows from the 1990s. May blessings be upon you for undertaking this task, Rosey. I myself have undertaken the task of discovering *If My Memory Serves Me True*, which it does a lot less than I'd like it to. I've also undertaken the task of discovering *If My Memory Serves Me True*.

There are yet more of my nostalgic ramblings to enjoy in *Those Knightmare Nights: The Preludes*, in which I reminisce about some of the programmes that used to be on shortly before Knightmare, and how much I used to enjoy them. Who knows, perhaps there's a hidden gem in there that you've completely forgotten; why not take a look and see?

We also have two new stories starting this month. In *The Forbidden Fear*, Chris Lunn reveals exactly what happened between Knightmare series 4 and 5, and how Lord Fear came to rise to power in the Dungeon. There's a very different kind of adventure starting in *Scandinavian Knightmares*, an absolutely mammoth tale that was sent to me by Jim Waterman. Jim tells me that the story has been written by a very close friend of his, Jón Pórsteinn Petúrsson, and has provided the following information about the author:

Jón Pórsteinn Petúrsson does not count himself as a literary man, but his number of years in metal is matched only by the number of axes he has to grind. His house is made of wood, and is permanently on fire. He has previously been described as "hairier than a troll" and "more sarcastic than Halli the Sarcastic". It is also said that he hates warm weather so much that he turns on the air-conditioning in winter, and totally ceases to function when the temperature rises above 15°C.

Perhaps this gives you some idea as to what the story might be like, but give it a go anyway - you might just find yourself enjoying it! Be warned,

though – this story is not for the easily offended.

And that's only the half of it! All your regular favourites are waiting for you too, so you'd better get reading, or you won't be finished before the next issue comes out!

Again, we start with a letter from the desk of Raven's Eye editor and Eye Shield superfan Ross Thompson.

Issue 51 was excellent! I loved the comment at the end of the Top Ten Sc-Fi programmes. *I haven't given it a second thought since* – hilarious! It was obvious that Knightmare would appear at number one – interesting to see Raven at number three as well! I myself am not sure if I prefer Raven or Knightmare.

I agree that Pixel gave good scenes but her character was quite limited – just good for one series, I think. When I watch Knightmare, I never seem to take in where the dungeoneers come from because it seems like useless information, but when you know the dungeoneer well, it's quite interesting to see *Dungeoneer Dwellings*. Poetry Corner was very fun to read as always!

Thanks once again for your unending support, Ross. I'm glad you appreciated my little joke there – I hoped it would tickle someone's funny bone. While nothing will ever replace Knightmare in my affections (as I have been totally obsessed with it for more than twenty years now) I can imagine that Raven might occupy a similar place in my heart if I were growing up with it today – it's certainly good enough!

After reading last issue's *Remember This?*, Rosey Collins of Harpenden was moved to write the following piece.

I've just read your *Remember This?* about the Swinging Pendulum in series 2. I really wonder why it was only used once, because David Rowe and friends obviously put a lot of effort into putting it together! It's a very impressive work of art. As the pendulum swings towards the screen, you see the off-screen part of the corridor reflected in it, and the reflection shifts in time with the movement of the pendulum. The shiny metal effect is also very good (although we know how easy *that* is to achieve from Neil Buchanan on *Art Attack*). Mr Higgins (whom you probably remember from school) would have been mightily impressed and given me a merit mark if I'd drawn something like that pendulum when he was teaching us one-point perspective.

I never realised you were such a fan of the Swinging Pendulum, Rosey, but then I often discover that I've never really realised the extent of my own feelings about many aspects of Knightmare until I actually sit down and write about them for TES. I do indeed remember Mr Higgins, art teacher extraordinaire and my form tutor in the Lower Sixth, although he didn't like me as much as he did you because I'm terrible at drawing!

When he read my unbiased and well-balanced review of series 8 in issue

50, Jim Waterman felt the urge to express the following views.

I don't think I will ever reach the corrosive level of contempt for series 8 that others have - I didn't see it at the time, and by the time I did I was well into my twenties with a more objective view of life. I suppose the debate will still rage as to whether it would have been more fitting to cut off at the end of series 7, with two consecutive winning quests and the memorable Barry, rather than the way it fizzled out rather pathetically.

I do feel it was a mistake that the entire Dungeon was given wholesale changes when the production team most likely knew this would be the last series - the shortened series really should have given them the hint. There was no need for it at all, and it seems like a last-ditch, desperate attempt to flog a horse that wasn't quite dead, but was in intensive care - only to administer a fatal overdose of the drug that could have allowed the horse to recover.

A striking and woefully accurate analogy, Jim. You've also raised a very interesting question – looking at the state of series 8, would it have been better if Knightmare had finished after series 7? On the whole, personally, I think not. There are some good bits in series 8, particularly during the first half, and at least we got Motley back! Also, I don't think I would have been able to survive my first term at secondary school without Knightmare waiting for me at the end of each overwhelming week, and even though I have since grown to realise that series 8 is by far my least favourite, it did the job just fine at the time. What do you think, readers? Why not write in and let me know, and we'll see if we can get another TES-based debate started!

Hold onto your hats, readers – it's time once again for the phenomenon that is Knightmare QI!

1. What does the following sequence represent? 19, 31, 39, 48, 55, 69.

Correct answer: These are the cumulative overall team numbers of quests that were cut short by the end of a series.

Cliché: Anything to do with ages or lottery numbers.

2. Which was the least common quest object?

Correct answer: The Talisman – it was only ever sought once, and retrieved on the same occasion!

Clichés: The Sword; no particular object (i.e. to survive the Dungeon, series 1).

3. During which quest did Mellisandre first appear?

Correct answer: Gavin's (Team 1 of Series 3) – she was there all right, although the appearance was silent.

Cliché: Cliff's (Team 2 of Series 3) – Mellie's first speaking appearance.

4. What was the most common contestant name?

Correct answer: James – taking into account the first names of all the advisors and dungeoneers, James is the clear winner, with eleven contestants in total (one dungeoneer and ten advisors) having that name.

Clichés: Simon, Chris – four dungeoneers each for these two names, making them the most common dungeoneer names, but not the most common contestant names overall.

5. What does this sequence represent? MA1, TA1, CR6, SH11, CR12, SW12,

SH14, CR16.

Correct answer: The first two letters of the quest objects that were redeemed, in chronological order, plus the number of quests that had already been undertaken for those objects, i.e. Dickon's was the sixth quest for the Crown overall.

Cliché: Postcodes.

6. What does this sequence represent? 3210, 3712, 4530, 0431, 3411, 0421, 0322, 1231.

Correct answer: Each four-figure number represents one series, with the first digit being the number of dungeoneers who died (or finished undefeated) on level one, the second digit the same for level two, the third digit for level three, and the fourth being the number of winners. For example, series 7 is 0322, because no dungeoneers died on level one, three died on level two, two died on level three, and two won.

Cliché: Anything to do with times on clocks or years.

7. What number did all the series 3 dungeoneers roll on the die?

Correct answer: 2.

Cliché: 1 – although we can see this number quite clearly as the die opens up, it is not the number on the top.

8. Which method of changing levels had the longest lifespan?

Correct answer: Trapdoors - from Scott in series 3 through to Rebecca in series 8, trapdoors had by far the longest overall lifespan of any level-changing method, even though they had a huge period of absence between series 3 and series 8.

Cliché: Wellways – they were commonly seen throughout series 1-4, but in this case, they don't quite make the cut. Well, well, well!

9. Throughout all eight series of Knightmare, how many contestants died?

Correct answer: 58 – 55 dungeoneers plus the 3 advisors of Chris I thanks to Medusa.

Clichés: 55 (just dungeoneers), 61 (dungeoneers including those from undefeated teams), 220 (all dungeoneers and advisors from losing teams), 244 (all dungeoneers and advisors in losing and undefeated teams).

10. How many characters said “Enter, Stranger,” during Knightmare’s run?

Correct answer: Three.

Cliché: Two.

Explanation: Treguard and Majida both said this quite a lot, although obviously there are those of us who object to the fact that Majida took over the phrase from the Dungeon Master, but that's beside the point. Believe it or not, Pickle also uttered the phrase “Enter, Stranger” during series 6, not to call in a new dungeoneer, but to share with Treguard his opinions about getting “some very strange results” from using the phrase!

Rank	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1	Drassil	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	37
2	Joe G-J	1	3	2	0	1	3	10	4	3	4	11
3	Gehn L	0	1	3	4	0	0	3	4	4	10	9
4	Pooka	0	1	4	10	1	0	3	10	1	10	-20

Congratulations, Drassil, on recapturing the title that was yours for so

long - you are the Knightmare QI champion once more! As a reward for this great honour, how do you fancy writing the questions for the next round? Oh, that was quick!

1. What is the only letter of the alphabet never to have been spellcast?
2. Which of these characters is the odd one out: Sir Hugh, Pixel, the Samurai or Gwendoline? See if you can conjure up the correct answer.
3. Excluding winners' trophies, in how many series of Knightmare did frightknights feature?
4. Which of these spells is the odd one out: HERO, HEROES, HOME or WIND?
5. Whose pet cat do we see during series 6?
6. Which of these is the odd one out: Folly, Merlin, wellways or Lillith? You might want to discuss this question with others at a later date.
7. What does the sequence 7, 15, 15, 12, 14, 13, 14, 15 signify? Finalise your answer.
8. Who was the first character to mispronounce something in Latin on Knightmare?
9. Which of these characters is the odd one out: Hordriss, Smirkenorff or Gumboil? As ever, Quite Interesting supplementary information will earn you credit.
10. How many teams met an "Ooh, nasty!" end in series 4?

Yes, readers, these questions come from the mind of Knightmare QI Master Drassil himself, so expect no mercy, although there are a few clues for you in there, if you can spot them. As usual, four points are available for each question - one for supplying the correct answer, one for identifying the cliché (or, in the case of TWO of these questions, the lack of a cliché) and two for any Quite Interesting supplementary information that is vaguely relevant to the question. E-mail your answers to the address at the foot of the page, or PM them to Eyeshield on the Knightmare Discussion Forum if you prefer, by Saturday August 16th 2008 and you could be the next Knightmare QI champion. Just imagine how great that would feel! Answers and results will be revealed in issue 53.

And now, as promised, to all my little helpers - Alan, Martin, Rosey, Chris, Jim, Jón, Ross, Liam and David (Drassil) - I say so long, and thanks for all the fish!

ALAN BOYD INTERVIEW

That's right, readers, it's time for another TES interview! This time it is my pleasure to be chatting with Alan Boyd, series 8 advisor and instigator of the KMV project at <http://kmv.partreal.com>. As I'm sure you know, Alan is one of the privileged few to have been a member of one of Knightmare's eight winning teams, as he was the captain of Dunstan's notorious band. My thanks go out to you once again for answering these questions for me, Alan - readers, prepare to be enthralled!

THE EYE SHIELD: Can you still recall in any detail the experience of auditioning for and appearing on Knightmare? What are your most vivid memories?

ALAN BOYD: I remember all of it. My most vivid memory would have to be the pain of actually getting to the interview - Oliver and me travelling through the nightmare (excuse the pun) of Norwich's one-way system to get to a specific car park near the interview location, and Dunstan and Alex going to the wrong venue. Fortunately, we'd aimed to arrive significantly early... we arrived late, but before they were ready for us. Other than that, I think we were all a little overexcited for something that turned out to be pretty mundane.

We met Sue Child - and someone else who we never saw again - and the interview lasted about fifteen minutes. We were given a handful of logic puzzles, which Alex and I stormed through (far more Alex than me, I have to say) and then we were given a role-play scenario, which I suppose you could say was like a mini, oral Knightmare. That wasn't a tough challenge, as Alex, Dunstan and I had been playing Dungeons and Dragons for years, but it's hard to say whether that scenario was always winnable and whether they were just judging our decision-making process. Then that was it; we went home, somewhat subdued.

As an advisor, how much control did you feel you had over the quest? Did Dunstan always do as he was told?

We had complete control of the quest. Dunstan always did (or tried to do) what we told him to do. Until I tried putting the helmet on myself, I hadn't realised how hard it was to judge ninety degrees, which was our biggest difficulty in guiding him. The only other difficulties were technical, as the earpiece given to the dungeoneer was somewhat crackly. Dunstan typically heard us shouting in the studio a good second or so before it came through the earpiece, loudly and with lots of static.

How did your team decide that Dunstan was going to be the dungeoneer? Did you practise guiding him around the garden a lot?

Well, I made myself captain as I had been the one putting everything together, submitting the application and so on. I considered doing the job of dungeoneer myself, but I figured that it would dilute my ability to make decisions if I couldn't see what was happening. At that point, the choices were between Alex, who was very tall, Oliver, who hadn't even seen Knightmare before, and Dunstan, who was small and relatively quick... so the decision was an easy one.

Guiding him around the garden? Yep, and the playground, my house, his house, the green room... Of course, looking back now, it was all a waste of time. Whenever you practise, you have so many subtle clues as to where you are and where you might be being aimed - the texture of the material under your feet, the light shining in your eyes, the sounds, and so on. It was nothing like a relatively silent studio with even lighting and floors. Not that we didn't enjoy doing it!

Aside from the overall challenge you faced, can you recall any particularly hairy moments on the quest? Did you ever think your number was up?

We used to have an ongoing joke with the floor manager who came to fetch us from the green room. After about our third room, we'd always announce, "Okay, this is it, this is the room where we die!" He'd always laugh and lead us through to the prep area. We knew we were a young team, and we knew very well how many (or how few, perhaps) teams won Knightmare. So it was always a question of how we'd die rather than if.

Ironically, there was one room where we forgot to joke to the floor manager. We were too busy fussing with something and he said something like, "Aren't you going to say it?" He laughed a little more than usual, we repeated our mantra and carried on. Of course, that room turned out to be Lord Fear's room. He must have known that, and of course realised that there was just no way we were going to lose.

The hairiest moment was the Corridor of Blades. That was the only puzzle where we knew in advance what was coming, and we knew its reputation.

How would you describe the general atmosphere as your quest got

closer and closer to victory? At which point did you realise that you might actually be able to win?

Never. As I say, we were always under the impression that we were going to lose. We just didn't know how much of a fight we'd be able to put up. It later transpired that the production team thought we were going to fail too, as they hadn't even written our final room(s). And of course, not having seen previous teams, we had no idea how many rooms level three had, or what big puzzles we had to deal with. I remember coming out of what turned out to be the big final puzzle and saying, "We STILL have Play Your Cards Right and the final puzzle to go!" We had always assumed that, as with the seasons before, the last puzzle was going to be a logic-based floor puzzle and that since so many people had died on Play Your Cards Right, they would keep that puzzle too.

Then we entered Lord Fear's chamber, and became confident for the first time ever. The thought process went a little like this:

Alan's brain: "Surely they won't kill us here. That's it, we've got it!"

Lord Fear: "Ah Dunstan, a warrior spell..."

Alan's brain: "Ah, no, it's a Paladin spell!"

Lord Fear: "Bad choice, Dunstan."

Alan's brain: "Uh-oh, the production team haven't realised that a Paladin is a holy warrior with lots of anti-evil powers."

Lord Fear: "Will you please take THAT..."

Alan's brain "Noooooooo!"

We got out of the room, the production team cheered, we were congratulated, and my first comment was, "But we haven't won yet, we still need to get out." I got laughed at.

Were you and your team-mates all big fans of Knightmare at that point?

Dunstan, Alex and I were, yes; huge fans. I think we were all members of the Knightmare Adventurers' Club at that point, too. Oliver had never seen it before.

Do you ever watch your quest on TV/video/DVD nowadays? Do you feel nostalgic/embarrassed/proud?

Yes, I saw it recently actually. I have to say it was embarrassing - we're all so small and look ridiculous! It's also so embarrassing to think, "Argh! Why did I do THAT?" It gets slightly better towards the end. At Lord

Fear's room and beyond, it becomes more a case of being funny and, I guess, feeling a little proud.

At the time, what was the reaction of your schoolfriends (and teachers)?

None at all. Dunstan, Oliver and I were all moving up to different secondary schools. We didn't run in to anyone from our old school.

Do you have a favourite Knightmare series, team, character and/or puzzle?

Series... I like the style of series 1 and 2, the effects from series 8 and the story from series 7! Team... I remember one dungeoneer who was truly legendary at interacting with the characters and was very amusing. Unfortunately, Google cannot identify him to me. (I think we know who you mean, Alan!) Character... Lord Fear. Hands down. Hilarious character. Nice actor. Puzzle... I was quite a big fan of Play Your Cards Right and the causeways. I always liked a bit of logic in the floor puzzles; it's a shame the causeways were always just a code and didn't really require any figuring out.

How did you feel when you found out that your series of Knightmare was to be the last?

Obviously, like every other fan, I was disappointed that my favourite TV show was being taken off the air. I never thought very highly of its replacement, either. I suppose there was an ounce of relief at actually having been on the show before it ended, too.

Did you ever find out why Maldame gave you her calling name when you were never presented with an opportunity to use it?

No. It could be interpreted (if you disapprove of my team winning) that we were given an easier level three and so it was cut short, although as we had the calling name, it's hard to see how we could have failed any challenge they might have given us. Alternatively, it could have been given as a red herring - certainly not every item was used in every level.

All I know is that the Dungeon code dictates that something must be given for something. We helped Maldame, so she had to give us something in return. Perhaps it was to be used in an alternative ending if we finished the quest right at the end of the series - Maldame confronting Lord Fear - but they didn't get to use it as they had time remaining.

Are there any other comments you'd like to make or opinions you'd like to express to the denizens of Knightmare Land about your quest, Knightmare itself, or any other vaguely related subjects?

I could always raise the issue of whether we deserved to win, but it's been well argued by everyone now, and I doubt anything more I have to say will change anyone's mind. Please just never forget when you judge any team that it's all much harder than it looks, and that every room of every team's quest was edited slightly, usually being cut for length. You can't see it from watching the show, but we were very quick (so we were told) at doing the logic puzzles. See, we had our good points, even if you cannot tell!

Tim Child remarked on the speed at which we solved some of our puzzles, and I recall someone (it may even have been me) saying that we didn't seem to solve them any faster than any other team. His comment was that they had to cut all the um-ing and ah-ing, otherwise it would be boring.

But besides that of course, there's just no saying how things are balanced. Perhaps, being a very young team, we were given an easier ride. Perhaps the difficulty was all the same. Maybe they didn't think we were going to make it, but as we got through the tougher challenges like the Corridor of Blades, they decided to cut some rooms in level three so that we would have the time to win - and yet let another team run for fun. Maybe they felt we were boring, but couldn't kill us off with the tougher challenges. Maybe they just felt that they needed a win to end the season, as many people have suggested. There's just no telling what the production team had in mind.

It's hard to say why some challenges appeared to be easier than others. Maybe the backup team was late in arriving. Maybe they weren't in a position (with filming spyglass sequences or having character availability) to let a team die. Maybe a prop was missing, so they had to put only two items in the clue room. Truly we'll never know.

My suspicion is that, within reasonable limits, the show was always balanced. I genuinely don't believe that we were given an easy ride. We did, after all, pass two of the hardest challenges that Knightmare ever featured, namely the fireball room and the Corridor of Blades. Why the Short Cut was brought in, we'll never know for certain, although I have theories. But of course, I'll never believe it's fair to criticise a team for

taking the easy path when presented with an easy one and a hard one. I don't think anyone in such a situation would voluntarily take the difficult path, and I think the show itself would have severely punished you for making such a silly decision.

There's certainly plenty of food for thought there. Thanks again, Alan.

REMEMBER THIS?

Series 4. Level 1/2.

THE CONVEYER BELT

This particular challenge has also been called the Corridor of Blades without the blades, and that's exactly what it was. The Conveyer Belt made several bladeless appearances in series 4, sometimes presenting a different challenge of its own. It was never seen without the blades after series 4, though, which made it a unique obstacle for the series. You might think that the Conveyer Belt without the blades would be much easier to deal with than its deadly doppelganger, and you'd be right, but this challenge, as we shall see, wasn't always a walk in the park.

The Conveyer Belt's first appearance was in the second episode of the series, when Helen used it at the very end of level one. Treguard commented that it was "powerful magic" but there was no real challenge to overcome, aside from a skull ghost to slip past on the way into the corridor. During Alistair's quest, the Conveyer Belt made a similar appearance in level two; Gundrada was on hand for a chat this time, making the process of travelling along the corridor slightly less monotonous. Interestingly enough, both Helen and Alistair actually reached the conclusion of the corridor, travelling through a large portal at its far end, whereas all subsequent dungeoneers to enter the corridor, whether or not it had blades, used one of the side exits.

When Simon boarded the Conveyer Belt in level two, it was fair enough to assume that there would be no blades to dodge, seeing as this was not level three. Strangely, there were a couple of blades this time, but Gundrada was present and did all the guiding, which was undoubtedly a good thing, considering the somewhat inadequate skills of Simon's directional guider. The bladeless corridor had to wait until Jeremy's quest, much later in the series, to make its next appearance. This time, there was a further challenge involved - Jeremy had to turn over an hourglass in order to stop the Conveyer Belt moving, as it seemed that the corridor was now endless, and a safe exit needed to be found along the way.

The Conveyer Belt made a similar and final appearance in Giles's quest, when a spanner was required in order to bung up the machinery driving the contraption and allow Giles to make a swift exit. In all, then, the

bladeless corridor appeared four times, only really providing a challenge for the last two, but it was a nice bit of computer animation, and provided a couple of memorable moments.

Difficulty: 3 Maybe an object required, but nothing too taxing.

Killer Instinct: 1 In this form, the corridor was unlikely to kill.

Gore Factor: 1 Without the blades, there could be no mess.

Fairness: 8 A nice piece of computer wizardry, with a couple of little challenges thrown in for good measure.

ADVENTURE TIME

As the never-ending journey continues, the Dungeon leads 15-6. This time, the challenge is from dungeoneer Gemma.

Gemma's quest begins in the clue room, where there is a table containing a bar of gold, a red gem and a silver key. Gemma describes the objects to her advisors.

"Well, team, I'm sure you know by now that these objects are not complimentary gifts," Treguard chuckles. "There's a price here, not only for taking them, but also for knowing which ones to take, and it's time for you to pay."

The far wall metamorphoses into the craggy features of Brangwen.

"Touch nothing yet, adventurer!" the wall monster demands. "Only with the truth may you earn your quest. I have three mysteries, and here is my first. I am hard, and very dense. Use your head, I'm your defence. What am I?"

The advisors chatter for a few seconds, but come up with the answer quite easily.

"Helmet," says Gemma.

"Truth accepted," Brangwen replies. "Here is my second. I cast my light upon your head, but when you see it, I am dead! What am I?"

Fortunately, one of the advisors has a well-thumbed junior encyclopaedia of space at home, and manages to come up with the correct answer.

"Star," says Gemma.

"Truth accepted," Brangwen replies again. "Here is my third. I was made by siblings' merge; my father's downfall was my urge. Though I sat at table round, for treachery I am renowned. Who am I?"

Another advisor has an extensive collection of writings about King Arthur and Camelot, so this question causes no problems.

"Mordred," Gemma says.

"Truth accepted," Brangwen replies for the third time. "Three is the score; you may learn more. Your quest is for the Sword, yet you may not wield it. A golden touch will please the cantankerous sovereign. The first step is the horse, but it is not the next step. Pass on, now."

"Remember, team, a perfect score means you may command her and she must answer!" Treguard urges.

"I command you," Gemma obliges.

"I hear you," Brangwen says in measured tones. "The doors ahead are not locked by any normal means. The walls await me."

Brangwen disappears, and the advisors return their attention to the

table. Wisely, they tell Gemma to take the red gem and the bar of gold, before directing her out of the clue room.

She emerges into the vast cavern that contains the pit of Smirkenorff, the Great Crested Green Dragon. His large reptilian head is poking out.

"Ah, another dungeoneer," Smirkenorff remarks haughtily. "There seems to be an endless supply of foolish young humans just waiting to blunder about in the Dungeon, eager to get themselves killed in some horrible way. How are you named, adventurer?"

"My name's Gemma," she tells the dragon. "Are you going to fly me to level two?"

"Does it look like I'm in a position to fly you anywhere right now?" Smirkenorff snaps irritably. "Mind you, there is something I know that you want to know, but I refuse to part with any of my extensive knowledge for free."

The advisors tell Gemma to offer Smirkenorff the red gem. When he sees it, the dragon's face lights up at once.

"Ah, a firestone," Smirkenorff rumbles with pleasure. "Most delicious, if a little bad for my digestion. Still, we all deserve a little treat from time to time. Place it on the ledge before you, please."

Gemma does so. Smirkenorff crunches the firestone up eagerly, and then belches a large jet of flame into the air.

"Oh, excuse me," he says embarrassedly. "Look, Gemma, I think you'd better be on your way now. The way past the blocker can be found with the word *serpentine*. Farewell."

Smirkenorff sinks back into his pit, quite embarrassed to have made such an exhibition of himself. Gemma is directed out of the cavern, into the throne room of Queen Kalina.

The self-proclaimed sovereign is sitting on her ornate throne, muttering bad-temperedly to herself. When she sees Gemma, her scowl deepens tenfold.

"Who gave you permission to come blundering into my private chambers?" Kalina snaps tersely. "This really is too bad! I have tolerated dungeoneers passing through my home for far too long, and now I intend to do something about it at last!"

Kalina raises her arms in a threatening gesture of magic. One of the advisors urgently tells Gemma to show her the bar of gold, which she does.

"I'll give you this if you let me pass!" Gemma exclaims desperately.

"Ooh, pretty," Queen Kalina remarks, lowering her arms slowly. "Well,

I'm still not happy about this, but I suppose I'll let you go... this time." She holds out her bejewelled hands for the gold, which Gemma slips into her slender fingers. Kalina clasps the ingot firmly to her chest, and lets out a long sigh.

"This really is a lovely present, dungeoneer," she sighs wistfully. "Now I feel guilty for being so short with you before. To make amends, I will tell you that the second step is the pig, but it is not the next step. Also, I have a spell for you; it is called TINY. Now, be on your way."

The advisors are surprised at this show of generosity from Queen Kalina, but they quickly direct Gemma out of the chamber, in case her mood changes again.

Gemma emerges into a small pink room with no visible means of exit. There is, however, a shining metal wall just before her, which grates forward and forms a huge, menacing face.

"Password!" the blocker demands.

"Serpentine," Gemma replies at once.

The blocker shoots off, clearing the path, but there is still no obvious way out. One of the advisors suddenly spots a very small archway carved into the wall, which had previously been obscured by the blocker. Gemma is directed over to it, but she is obviously far too large to fit through.

"Come now, team," Treguard tuts reprovingly. "Take the right steps to enable Gemma to progress further along the path!"

"Spellcasting:" declares the spellcaster, cottoning on. "T-I-N-Y!"

Gemma immediately shrinks down to about a third of her normal height. This allows her to pass safely through the door.

In the next chamber, the advisors can see nothing apart from the small area of rocky wall and floor immediately surrounding Gemma.

"Walk forwards," instructs an advisor.

"I don't think it's very safe for Gemma to be wandering around in this state," Treguard remarks heavily.

"Dispel:" says the spellcaster, who is still on the ball. "Y-N-I-T."

Gemma shoots up to her full height, revealing the extent of the rocky room in which she has arrived. There is someone else in the room as well, who jumps in surprise when he sees Gemma, causing the tiny bells on his comical headgear to jangle profusely.

"Cor, strike a light!" Motley exclaims in alarm. "Where did you come from?"

"That little door down there," Gemma replies.

"Hmm, well it's a good thing you managed to find your own way back to

size, cos I don't have any magic dust on me today," Motley smiles good-naturedly. "I do have something for you, though - it's a riddle. Tell me, what is the longest word in the dictionary?"

The third advisor, who does not have a book about space or Arthurian legend, has a book of little jokes and riddles such as this one, and is able to remember the answer after a few seconds' thought.

"Elastic," Gemma says to Motley.

"*Well*, blow me down," Motley says emphatically. "You've done *well* to get that one right. *Well*, to be honest with you, I didn't think you'd do so *well*. *Well*, seeing as you have, I'd do *well* to give you your reward. And I just have, so I hope you were listening *well*!"

With that, Motley scampers out of the chamber. The advisors discuss his words for a while, and the sharp wits of the spellcaster come into play once again.

"Spellcasting:" she says. "W-E-L-L."

A stone wellway appears in the corner of the rocky chamber. The advisors direct Gemma down the well, and into level two.

Does Gemma have what it takes to survive in level two? Read the next Adventure Time to find out.

THE AUDIO PLAY'S THE THING

Part One

Never let it be said, readers, that The Eye Shield is out of touch with its fellow Knightmare tribute projects. This new section of the fanzine will examine the past, present and future of the excellent Knightmare audio plays, which come from the imaginative minds of Martin "HStorm" Odoni and his dedicated crew of fellow voice actors.

So far, two audio plays have been recorded and uploaded onto the internet, and it is these that the first two instalments of this article will be dealing with. These two masterpieces - *Famous For Retreating* and the much shorter yet equally entertaining *Knightmare Today* - can both be downloaded at www.kmramdram.co.uk and if you're curious as to my personal thoughts and opinions about them, keep reading this article and you should be well satisfied.

Martin and the gang hope to record two further audio plays in the near future, and *The Audio Play's the Thing* will hopefully be playing host to a full write-up of the recording session. This issue, however, I share with you my own thoughts about the two current audio plays, before posing a few questions to Mr Martin Odoni himself, who came up with the idea for this section. (Although I myself claim full credit for the title - of course, I don't know whether that's a good or a bad thing!)

FAMOUS FOR RETREATING (Released November 2006):

Written by **Martin Odoni** and **Ricky Temple**.

Featuring **Martin Odoni** as Lord Fear and Honesty Bartram, **Russell Odoni** as Treguard, **Eleanor Booth-Davey** as Stiletta and Salvania, **Alec Downs** as Skarkill and Merlin, **Sue McPherson** as Majida and Heggatty, **Clare Speedie** as Elita and Greystagg, and **Vivienne Traill** as Lady Brinkatore and Mellisandre.

Famous for Retreating is a compelling story and is very dramatic in parts, yet there is a good sprinkling of comedy too, particularly with the fond lampooning of popular Knightmare characters such as Majida, Honesty Bartram, Merlin and Heggatty.

It contains a lot of good elaboration on the concept of Witch Haven and Greystagg's coven, specifically how they rely on fresh supplies of witch amber to maintain their magic powers, and how they are involved in a

continuing struggle against Lord Fear to gain access to that amber. This builds nicely on much of the back-story from series 6.

Treguard has never before been presented as so enigmatic and shrewd, but this is how he comes across here thanks to a clever script and Russell Odoni's skilful interpretation of it. Similarly, Lord Fear comes across as very sarcastic and witty, yet he is constantly a very real threat, thanks to the talents of Martin Odoni.

The hate-filled banter between Lord Fear and Greystagg is very effective, and really draws upon and increases the significance of Julie's level three spyglass sequence in series 7.

The idea of the Trial by Saga is very clever and compellingly unravelled, as Treguard really manipulates Lord Fear by enticing him to judge which story is the more disturbing, and of course on his own terms, Fear's own story is not disturbing at all! This really shows where Treguard has a crucial advantage over Lord Fear - he can be shrewd and sneaky too, but in a far more effective way.

Lord Fear's story is an interesting take on the Knightmare legend, and certainly attempts to fill in a lot of the gaps in the overall story, specifically what might have transpired between series 4 and 5 to facilitate the massive handover of power from Mogdred to Lord Fear. The presentation of Merlin as a doddery old fool is very funny and certainly in keeping with his character, if not exactly pleasing to diehard Merlin fans!

The idea that Lord Fear is actually a Saxon, like Treguard, is interesting. This part of the story allows us to see a glimpse of whatever remains of Lord Fear's humanity, as he obviously feels betrayed and even upset by how he was treated by Merlin, which ultimately turned him to evil.

We also touch on an interesting back-story for the arrival of technomagic in Knightmare, as it is revealed that Mogdred's invention and utilisation of the Automatum was the first successful attempt at this brand of sorcery.

The telling of Stilettta's back-story is obviously all part of Treguard's shrewd and clever plan, and really shows the Dungeon Master to be in control of the whole situation in the most Machiavellian way.

This part of the play cleverly builds on Mellisandre's throwaway comment from series 4 that she never seems to get any older, and with the inclusion of Lady Brinkatore and the origins of Dreadnort, it also builds further on the back-story of series 6.

The concluding portion of Stilett's story is a further insight into whatever little remains of Lord Fear's humanity. By the end of the play, we can see that even Lord Fear possesses at least some sense of fair play and morality... in the end!

KNIGHTMARE TODAY (Released December 2007):

Written by **Martin Odoni**.

Featuring **Martin Odoni** as Dr Bert Merlin and **Russell Odoni** as Professor F J Hordriss.

The main focus of this funny little festive feature is Hordriss and Merlin exchanging insults under the pretence of discussing Knightmare's transitional years (series 4/5), which establishes a clear rivalry between the two characters. This rivalry can be inferred from Knightmare itself on occasion, particularly during episode 13 of series 6, in which Hordriss is definitively put right about just who is *the greatest magician of them all*.

Hordriss's unerring deadpan style in this is excellent - whatever Merlin throws at him, and whatever he himself throws back, he never seems to be anywhere near losing control of his temper, although he makes it perfectly clear that he is willing and able to exchange insults for as long as necessary. Again, your voice talents have impressed me, Russell Odoni.

Somewhere in amongst the insults, there are some very interesting points about Knightmare's transitional years, which I myself had not picked up on at the time, as I did not really remember much about the early series after I'd watched series 4 and 5 on video a few times.

Let's talk to Martin "HStorm" Odoni now about Knightmare in general, how the audio plays came into being, what he thinks of them, and his plans for the future.

THE EYE SHIELD: Do you have a favourite Knightmare series, team, puzzle, creature and/or character?

MARTIN ODONI: When I get asked which was my favourite series, I tend to give a slightly odd answer that sounds contradictory. I subscribe to the common view that season 3 was the best in terms of balance and atmosphere, but my favourite is season 2. It's probably just because it was the only early season that I recorded on video back in the day, and so it's the one I remember best from the time when *Knightmare* was what I felt it always should be.

My favourite team is probably team 7 from that year (Neil and co). They're not well-remembered by many, and for sure they weren't the sharpest knives in the kitchen drawer (oh how I hope adulthood has taught them the proper way to spell words beginning with S), but they did have a good sense of humour, and reaching the end of level two was a good achievement given their limitations.

Puzzle... well, I could be boring and predictable and say the Corridor of Blades, and there's no doubt in my mind that it was one of the classics. But I'll go instead for something less dramatic - the Stained Glass Window Chamber from seasons 2 and 3. It looked absolutely beautiful and ethereal, as did so many of the level three chambers in the hand-painted days. It was also spooky - those strange footsteps you could hear in the background coming from an unseen source would make my nerves jangle - and the tricks-with-light solution was always very neat.

My favourite creature was the catacombite. Why? Just look at it! My favourite character was Lord Fear, a terrific parody of the '80s/'90s technocrats, as well as a wonderfully easy character to write for. He always had such a smart wit, which is a really accessible mindset for a writer.

How did the idea for the whole concept of *Famous For Retreating* (writing it, casting it and making it) come about?

The original idea lies with a set of prose fanfics I wrote back in 2002. One of them, *The Chrysalis*, which was almost as long as a Dave Morris novella, was my original idea for giving Lord Fear an origin story that spanned the gap between seasons 4 and 5. (I think you can still find it somewhere on www.fanfiction.net.) Sadly, the story worked far better in my head than it did on paper. It proved to be massively overlong, and failed to offer nearly enough insight into why Lord Fear would be interested in technology. The story also contained a dreadful cliché that I only noticed with hindsight - Lord Fear was effectively just Mogdred in

a new body. Well, it was a bit more complex than that, but still... I can't believe I ever thought that would work!

In mid-2004, I decided I wanted to abandon the old line of fanfics I'd written in favour of writing a completely new version of Lord Fear's origin. I'd been reading through some historical books about obscure Saxon and Viking customs, and came across stories about how sagas would sometimes be told as a contest. That was where I got the idea about Treguard and Lord Fear having to do battle with stories, and I realised I could use that as a vehicle for Fear to explain his emergence retrospectively.

I was initially planning to write it as prose, but I'd been listening to some fan-made audio plays that were based on Blake's 7 (another favourite series of mine) and I realised that if you could do Blake with sound alone, why not Knightmare? It would be a nice idea for a meet-up of fans, and it would also be far easier to release the finished product to the public than with the RPG.

Writing the original script was surprisingly easy. The first draft was done in a little over five weeks, if I remember rightly. I was struggling a little with Lord Fear's origin story, so Ricky Temple stepped up to the plate to help with that, and together we got the draft finished in double-quick time.

The biggest difficulty was not the story itself, but the casting. The cast was originally far larger, and with more characters. For instance, Lissard was supposed to accompany Lord Fear and Skarkill in the tunnel scenes, while Hordriss, not Greystagg, was meant to give Salvania the emerald dagger as a present. Unfortunately, cast members kept having to drop out because of other commitments that simply had to take priority. We kept postponing the recording to try and suit everybody, but still the problem reared its head over and over. Sometimes we could bring in other cast members to replace the dropouts - although most of the new ones would also drop out - while at other times we'd simply get established cast to double up, as it were. Sometimes I could merge two roles - when Robin Barlow had to drop out, for example, I simply gave Hordriss's scenes to Greystagg.

But we were close to breaking point by February 2005. We'd committed to recording the following month, and the cast had become so small that

everyone except Eleanor was playing at least two characters. Then Az Sanders, Louise Brockhouse and Ricky Temple all had to drop out with two weeks to go until recording, and so I had to find a way to re-cast Treguard, Greystagg, Merlin, Skarkill and Honesty Bartram. Russell was on hand to take over Treguard, thankfully, and Greystagg I gave to Eleanor (who was already supposed to be playing Elita). In despair, I then cut Lissard from the story altogether and merged his role into Skarkill's, which explains why the Opposition seems to be a little under-represented in the play. I gave Merlin's and Skarkill's roles to Alec, who had previously been cast as Lissard, and I took up the part of Bartram myself.

When it came to recording week, I met Eleanor in the flesh for the first time, and realised she had a good voice for Stiletta, so I swapped her roles with Clare's. Clare, who arrived a day after everyone else, was alarmed when she realised she was going to be playing Elita and Greystagg instead of the character she'd been preparing for! But she still did wonderfully well, especially with Elita. For me, she even outdid Stephanie Hesp's delivery of "Faceache!"

All the casting chaos in the previous few months meant that, after a while, re-drafting largely became a matter of adjusting to the ever-contracting cast, rather than making improvements to the story. This is why there are a few overcooked lines that I'd have liked to revise if I'd had time. (I'm especially unhappy with Lord Fear's monologue about Mogdred's theories, which I thought was overlong and very clunky.)

How did you decide which actors played which parts?

All in all, casting was more a matter of simply getting enough people in to do the job than fussing about who would be best in which role. The late switch of Eleanor and Clare was about the only time we had that luxury.

How did you prepare for your roles? Did you watch the characters' appearances on *Knightmare* several times, practise into a tape recorder etc, or did you just turn up and say the lines?

We did watch recordings a bit, but for the most part, yeah, we just turned up and spoke into the mic. Most of the team gathered around the table in Alec's flat the evening before recording began and talked in some depth about how to approach our performances. We concluded that the best way to go was to do our best portrayal of the characters *as we understood them*, rather than trying to do an impression of what we saw on TV, as that would just turn the play into a parody, which we absolutely

wanted to avoid, hence Russell's very sinister and cold version of Treguard, and Clare's very Scottish-sounding Greystagg.

Also worth mentioning is Alec's version of Merlin. He had seen very little of John Woodnutt's portrayal, and so instead of homing in on that, we suggested he play the role as a more serious version of Slartibartfast from *The Hitch Hikers' Guide to the Galaxy*, a character Alec was much more familiar with.

Which characters do you think were pulled off (for want of a better expression) most effectively in *Famous For Retreating*?

We were all particularly pleased with Alec's portrayal of Skarkill. He was a little hesitant at times - not surprising given how little acting experience he has - but there were other times when he hit his stride very well. It's not saying much, as I'm no fan of Rayner Bourton, but I thought Alec's handling of the squabbles between Skarkill and Elita was at least as good as what happened on TV.

Do you have other acting interests apart from the audio plays?

No. Sue used to be in a drama group up in Stirling, and Ricky has dabbled quite a bit, especially when he was at college, but other than that, we're all pretty green.

Knightmare Today hints strongly at a rivalry between Hordriss and Merlin, which manifests itself as an exchange of elaborate insults. Even though the two characters appeared in the show together for two years, it has often been noted (sometimes by me) that Hordriss took over Merlin's role as "main goodie wizard" from series 5 onwards. **Is the two characters' possible rivalry for this role something that interests you?**

You may be crediting *Knightmare Today* with slightly more depth than it really merits there, but yes, I have often wondered about it. The fact that there was no direct interaction between Merlin and Hordriss on-screen is frustrating, as they seemed an obvious combination to create friction, which always makes for a good plot. See the showdown between Hordriss and Grimaldine in season 7? Hordriss clearly has issues with being proven *not* to be above everyone else after all, especially by a fellow sorcerer. And as Merlin clearly outranked Hordriss in the realm of sorcery, there must have been some jealousy there, as intimated when Hordriss was giving magic lessons in season 6.

Tell us about your plans for future audio plays.

Two plays are in the pipeline, plus another sketch a little like *Knightmare Today*. The big priority, and by far the biggest project we've done to date, is the drama play that goes under the working title *When Five Tribes Go To War*. This is set in the same continuity as *Famous For Retreating*, and will feature all the "big four" villains. It's a longer story than the first play, and has a darker, bleaker feel.

The second play is a comedy, which is therefore not part of the continuity at all. Like *Knightmare Today*, it fuses *Knightmare* with a comedy series from the past. As a clue to what that series is, I can tell you that the title of the play is *Yes, Dungeon Master*.

The sketch is written by Andy Marshall and is called *Bolt To The Head*. It's putatively set immediately after *When Five Tribes Go To War*, although again, it's not really part of continuity. It's based on a radio sketch done by the Canadian comedy act *The Frantics*.

Hopefully that little lot will keep *Knightmare* fans happy for a while. If there's sufficient demand for more, however, there are plans in place for a third play in the *FFR* series much further down the line. I can't reveal much about those plans, but I can say it would definitely be the final instalment in that particular series.

However, other spin-off projects are under consideration. Ricky and Andy, with Liz Northcutt, are writing a series of prose stories set in the same continuity as *Famous For Retreating* called *The Fire And Ice Chronicles*. There are plans, not yet confirmed, to make a couple of these as audio plays rather than as prose.

Do you have any other comments you'd like to make or interesting/amusing stories you'd like to share about the audio plays, *Knightmare* or even *The Eye Shield*?

My memories of the week of recording are largely a blur three years on. I have very distinct memories of how I felt at every given point - nervous, then intrepid, then empowered, then exhilarated etc - but I remember very little of the detail of what we did. I do remember distinctly that it was really satisfying work to do, and that there was a tremendous camaraderie between the members of the team.

It was also a very valuable experience in terms of broadening our

horizons, and I want to state now that I have learned four very important things from doing media projects like these:

- 1) These projects are great fun to do.
- 2) They're hell to organise.
- 3) You should never promise a list of four very important things you've learned when you can only remember three of them.
- 4) Erm...

Cheers, Martin - I'm sure we can all find ways to apply that advice to our own lives.

Next Issue: Exclusive interviews with *Famous For Retreating* cast members Alec Downs, Clare Speedie and Sue McPherson.

KIDS' TV SHOWS I GREW UP WITH

Kids' TV of the 1990s II

By Rosey Collins

Bucky O'Hare and the Toad Wars (1991)

This was a very imaginative action/adventure cartoon, based on an even more imaginative comic book, set fractionally in San Francisco, but for the vast majority of the time in a parallel universe called the Aniverse, which was populated by anthropomorphic animals. The single thirteen-episode series followed the adventures of Captain Bucky O'Hare of the frigate *Righteous Indignation*, and his crew (I shall get on to them in a bit) in their struggle against the toad empire and its efforts to take over the Aniverse.

Complicated? Yes! Perhaps I should start by explaining the toads: a "once peaceful race", according to a little video clip we see in one episode, which had been taken over by Komplex: a computer of the toads' own creation, originally designed to serve them. Komplex was perhaps one of the last genuinely scary villains in children's television, and also provided a good deal of satire. He just goes to show that if we're not careful, computers will take over. We don't seem to have listened, do we? Anyway, directly underneath Komplex was Toadborg: a cyborg, except he was a toad rather than a person (a toad-borg - geddit?), who was also a very frightening and convincing villain. (He was designed like a robot with bits that slotted into place, which meant that his action figure was constantly falling apart, but you can't have everything.) Humour was provided by the Toad Air Marshall, a squat little character with an obnoxious voice that was perfect for yelling at reluctant toad warriors, Frix and Frax. Mercenary Al Negator (an alligator, don'tcha know) appeared in four episodes when the toads needed to buy his services, and they also had a great many warriors called Storm Toads at their disposal.

I said I would run through Bucky's crew, and these are they: first mate Jenny, a genetically blessed cat with mysterious magical powers; gunner Deadeye Duck, a one-eyed, four-armed ex-space pirate (no, really) and my personal favourite character; AFC Blinky, AFC meaning Android First Class, a cute little one-eyed walking, talking computer; Bruiser, a Berserker Baboon with a funny voice and lot of muscle, but not much up top (you know the kind of thing); and last but not least, engineer Willy DuWitt, a blond-haired, bespectacled pubescent boy genius who was able to walk in and out of the *Righteous Indignation* using the photon

accelerator he had built in his bedroom. The photon accelerator on the *Righteous Indignation* was the cause of a great many problems, including the disappearance of Bruiser's brother Bruce, the engineer whom Willy replaced. In the comic book, Willy was stuck in the Aniverse and desperate to get home. As I said, in the TV show he could go home to San Francisco whenever he wasn't needed - or he had to "see [his] parents and go to school and stuff" - which was arguably a little cushy in comparison, but they did the old thing of his experiences in the Aniverse helping him to solve his problems at home. That was quite fun.

Also assisting Bucky and co. was the bumbling Commander Dogstar in his frigate the *Indefatigable*, along with his mostly canine crew (there was also a mole and an android bee - well, why not?). Dogstar was a fairly amusing stereotypical naval officer-type character... easily overlooked, I'm afraid.

I said it was complicated. I've typed over a page, and I haven't even got into why it was such a great cartoon. Quickly, then: well developed and likeable characters; lots of action involving cool space ships and laser guns and things; and really deep, complex and sophisticated plots. I think I read somewhere that it wasn't commissioned for a second series because it was too complicated. That was a great shame; and was it also the beginning of the dumbing down of children's television? (I understood it, and I was six!)

Avenger Penguins (1993-1994)

This was one of Cosgrove-Hall's later efforts, and I shall tell you how it lived up to its predecessors in a moment. But let me start with the premise: three anthropomorphic penguins - Marlon, Rocky and Bluey - spent their time hanging out in an ice cream parlour called Slush City (frequented by bizarre and amusing tertiary characters, and run by a sexy lady penguin called Bella, who was voiced by... Jimmy Hibbert!) or taking recreational rides around the Big City on their motorbikes... until they accidentally stumbled upon attempts at world domination by insane villain Karaktikus P. Doom and his tragic little Quasimodo-esque assistant, Harry Slime. The show was a lot of fun in the way it parodied action cartoons - *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* springs to mind - with its own unique and extremely random brand of humour.

The only way I can think to say everything I want to about this show is to tell you my own little personal *Avenger Penguins* story. Until very

recently, I didn't remember much about it, except for one hilarious episode called "Surprise Fate" which I remembered in minute detail. In it, Doom recruits an escaped lunatic called Annabelle the Animal, who eats absolutely anything black and white. Rather than just sending Annabelle to the penguins' apartment (above Irv's Garage), Doom organises for her to appear on *Blind Date* - or, in the world of Cosgrove-Hall, *Surprise Fate* - with the Avenger Penguins. She picks Marlon, he's wearing a special suit so he doesn't quite look black and white, and Rocky and Bluey have until he undresses to figure out who Annabelle is and rescue their friend... no, really, it's a brilliant episode.

From this, I was convinced that I used to love *Avenger Penguins*, and was quite excited when I found that all twenty-six episodes had been released on DVD. I ordered it from Amazon, and then Jake and I spent the next few weeks watching it. So how was it? Weird! Though a lot of fun, it was - I say again - *random*, a little unsure of its premise and not as funny or compelling as the likes of *Count Duckula*. I remember saying to Jake at one point, "*Count Duckula* took a few episodes to find its feet, didn't it? Maybe it'll get better." Then a few episodes into the first series is "*Cat Pig, Cat of Iron*". After what I had already seen, the title was discouraging, but as it turned out it was very funny indeed. I hoped the show would then maintain this standard, but to be honest, it didn't. It's a good cartoon, and there were some really lovely moments worthy of Cosgrove-Hall's earlier efforts. "*Surprise Fate*" was every bit as good as I remembered, and there were some other gems in there too. I have to say, though, that it wasn't as good as I remembered. But it had a fantastic theme tune with a *really* cool intro.

Albert the Fifth Musketeer (1994)

This eccentric little cartoon is another glittering gem in Jimmy Hibbert's impressive filmography. As the title suggests, it follows the antics of the Three Musketeers (of which there are four, as everyone knows) and - according to this particular incarnation of these classic characters - the unsung brains of the operation, Albert. The title character himself was a delight. With so many hilarious characters stealing the limelight, it would have been easy to make the rather less funny protagonist forgettable, with his calm manner and tendency not to let the situation spiral out of control. But there were factors that made Albert as compelling as his much more amusing co-stars: he was comically short (that's a dreadful thing to say!), had a funny French accent (Jimmy Hibbert, of course) and would sometimes surprise us by whipping out a new invention and using it

in an unexpected way - and I'm thinking specifically of the occasion when he whipped out his sword, pushed a little button to make it grow and used it to vault over the heads of the cardinals' guards who were challenging him.

I am always saying that comparisons are odious, but it *is* fun to compare this cartoon to *Dogtanian and the Three Musketeers*. In contrast to their canine counterparts, D'Artagnan and the Three Musketeers are completely incompetent, as is Monsieur Treville; Queen Anne isn't very on the ball either, and Louis XIII (also voiced by Jimmy Hibbert, with an even funnier French accent than Albert's) is the most delightful portrayal of a stereotypical foppish French king I have ever seen. Richelieu and Milady both have some intelligence, but (in spite of Susan Sheridan's inferior voice talents) they adequately compensate for this with their own brand of humour. Okay, so Milady bursting out of secret entrances resulting in injury to the cardinal doesn't *sound* very funny when you read it off the screen... but it really is.

As for plots, a small handful of episodes incorporated ideas from Dumas's novel, but my memories of those particular episodes are sketchy at best. Mostly it would be something new, and hilariously trivial (again, in contrast to *Dogtanian*, who constantly had to save France), like the King refuses to get out of bed until he's had some strawberries, or - my personal favourite - the Queen sends the Musketeers out to find the man who is supposed to be bringing his quartet of water ballet-dancing tortoises to her birthday party. (There's this bit where the tortoises are all trotting off and the Musketeers are running after them and can't catch them... it's hysterical.)

The Adventures of Sinbad (1996-1998)

Please read on. I start with that because I've got a sort of feeling - with no evidence of any kind - that most people won't have watched this obscure Canadian import. But you might be interested anyway, as you're all fantasy fans and it's a take on an old legend - perhaps the most famous eastern legend of all, or at least it was before Disney got hold of *Aladdin*.

This one's a bit of a cheat, firstly because I didn't strictly speaking grow up with it; I watched it in my teens when it was on Channel 5's Saturday morning kids' TV thing *Milkshake*. Its being on that show confirms my belief that it was made with children in mind - although I do think that it was aimed at a family audience rather than exclusively at children, sort

of like the recent BBC drama *Robin Hood* (Jake can claim credit for that comparison, even though he never watched *The Adventures of Sinbad* - and it must be said, I quite understand why).

In most respects, the show was mediocre. The acting was slightly rubbish, although small but hunky Zen Gesner in the title role helped things along. He wasn't exactly convincing, but he was okay, and there was a certain charm about him. He also had great chemistry with Jacqueline Collen who played Maeve, the female lead of the first series and Sinbad's only true love, in spite of what misguided fans might say (more on that shortly). This first series set up a nice little ongoing plot: evil sorceress Rumina, a recurring character, has once upon a time turned Maeve's brother Dermott into a hawk for whatever reason. Maeve has been learning magic in order to defeat Rumina, and in a two-part pilot that just manages to keep afloat, she and Dermott are picked up by Sinbad and join him on his ship the *Nomad*. Dermott, a cutesy hawk, was a compelling cast member, it has to be said. At the end of this two-parter Rumina's father, Turok, is killed by Sinbad, so for the rest of the series Rumina wants revenge and Maeve wants revenge and stuff happens and sometimes Rumina's not in it so Sinbad and co. have adventures on a mysterious island without her... and it's just really fun.

The other three main cast members were Doubar, Sinbad's older brother who looked absolutely nothing like him, and acted worse than anyone other than some guest stars (I liked him anyway, though); Firouz, the bumbling inventor sciencey type you always get in these things; and Rongar, a rescued slave who never said anything because his tongue had been cut out (ouch!).

There was a second series, which started with Maeve falling off the *Nomad* and Sinbad getting washed onto a desert island when he jumped in after her (numpty). Here he met Bryn, a mysterious and scantily-clad young woman with no memory of her life before waking up on the island. At the end of this episode, Sinbad learns that Maeve has been transported to a parallel universe where she can work on her magic until she's ready to face Rumina (I mean, of course that's what happened!); Bryn joins the crew of the *Nomad*, because they have no girl now, and is adopted by Dermott.

It may not have been brilliant, but this show has quite a loyal fan following on the internet. Season two has plenty of fans (and

Sinbad/Bryn shippers), but *Sinbad* purists really don't like it, and to an extent I am inclined to agree. I don't object to Bryn, as many do; it wasn't her fault Maeve wasn't there, and even though she had a little bit of a flirtation going on with Sinbad, it was made clear that Maeve still had that special place in his heart. But without her, the show lost a great deal. None of the other characters knew Dermott was actually a bewitched young Celt (did I mention Maeve was Irish... sort of, if you ignore her accent), and the writers/directors/whoever didn't give those of us watching at home any indication that they remembered. Rumina's absence meant that even more plot strands were cut off completely - especially as the end of season one saw her resurrected father crawling his way out of a ruin and laughing evilly. Sources claim that, given time, Bryn would have been revealed to be Rumina's younger sister and connected to the plot in some hugely important way. Maybe they *were* planning on continuing it, then - but without Jacqueline Collen or Julianne Morris (who played Rumina... not *that* brilliantly), how could they?

I don't think they *were* planning on getting their show cancelled, so they wouldn't *have* to finish it, by making drastic changes to the style. But if that *was* what they were going for, it worked. The most obvious change was that Sinbad's hair got longer, his trousers got tighter (*much* tighter) and he frequently forgot to shave. It was a good look for Zen, but not for the character. He was suddenly much angrier and more aggressive, and the amount of women he picked up was extraordinary. In season one he used to flirt a bit, but in season two it was made clear that he was doing *a lot* more than that. There was a degree of suggestiveness you never would have seen in season one. Maybe it got a later slot in its country of origin and they decided to sex it up - who knows? (Canadian fans of the show, I suppose.)

After that, the show was cancelled. If you care to look (which I did - you may not), you'll find on the internet several fans bemoaning the fact that the story was never finished, and one website where they've actually got off - or, rather, on - their bums and written three fan seasons themselves. I am happy to admit that *The Adventures of Sinbad* wasn't brilliant quality television, and here I must mention the unsubtle plots and extremely dubious CG monsters; but it was fun, it had a certain charm about it and, if you actually sat down and watched it, it was surprisingly compelling.

PUZZLE PAGE ONE

Knightmare Family Fortunes I

All the questions below have several possible answers, each one of which is worth a different number of points. Play this with a friend, and come up with one answer each for each question. (If you have no friends, come up with two answers for each question yourself.) Check your answers at the bottom of the page, and then add up your score. If, between you, you manage to score two hundred points, you win five thousand pounds! If, in addition to this, you come up with all five top answers, you win a car as well! Good luck.

(Please note: All prizes are symbolic and do not actually exist.)

- 1.) Name a Knightmare wall monster.
- 2.) Name a Knightmare dwarf.
- 3.) Name a Knightmare character played by Clifford Norgate.
- 4.) Name a Knightmare series featuring dwarf tunnels.
- 5.) Name a Knightmare character beginning with M.

OUR SURVEY SAID...

- 1.) **Granitas (TOP ANSWER! 30 points.) Igneous (20 points.) Olgarth (20 points.) Golgarach (10 points.) Brangwen (10 points.)**
- 2.) **Bumptious (or just "The Dwarf!") (TOP ANSWER! 30 points.) Elshander (15 points.)**
- 3.) **Hordriss (TOP ANSWER! 30 points.) Smirkenorff (20 points.) Oakley (20 points.) Dreadnort (10 points.) Owen (10 points.)**
- 4.) **Series 3 (TOP ANSWER! 30 points.) Series 6 (20 points.) Series 7 (20 points.) Series 8 (10 points.)**
- 5.) **Merlin (TOP ANSWER! 30 points.) Motley (25 points.) Mogdred (20 points.) Majida (15 points.) Mellisandre (15 points.) Mildread (10 points.) Marta (10 points.) Malice (5 points.) Maldame (5 points.) Morghanna (5 points.) McGrew (5 points.) Mrs Grimwold (5 points.)**

THE FORBIDDEN FEAR

By Chris Lunn

Pickle whistled happily as he approached the castle. He had been on a visit to his family and had left Treguard to ponder his books. That was the beauty of a phase shift; Treguard actually let Pickle do what he wished for a change. Pickle looked up at the great castle walls, expecting to see the flicker of torchlight from his master's chambers. Seeing only darkness, Pickle frowned.

"That's odd, the master never lets the torches go out."

Hurrying towards the drawbridge, Pickle immediately found another odd thing. The doors to the castle, which were normally kept shut during the time of shifting, were wide open.

"What's the silly old fool done now?" Pickle muttered.

He ran across the drawbridge and entered the castle. Entering his master's quarters, he saw Treguard's cloak tossed on the floor and books scattered about the room. He looked at the titles of two of the books: *Feare and the Forbidden Level* and *Locking Spells and How to Undo Them*. Sorting through the papers on the floor, he found a hastily written note. With trembling fingers, he picked it up and began to read.

Pickle, if you are reading this then my attempts have been in vain. Lord Fear has escaped from the Forbidden Level and even now is tightening his hold on the Dungeon. I have been transported by means of a trap set by Lord Fear upon his escape, into the Forbidden Zone. You must seek Merlin in level two; he will explain all to you. Time grows short; enter the Dungeon, Pickle, and find the Green Warden of level one. She will assist you to level two. Flee the castle before Lord Fear arrives. Good luck, young elf. Treguard.

"Oh, Master!" Pickle sobbed.

Pickle rushed from the room and headed to the quest chamber. Arriving breathless in the chamber, Pickle put on the knapsack and ripped several pages from his book, hoping that knowledge of prior quests would help him on his journey. Then he turned to the Dungeon entrance and walked slowly forward.

Pickle felt the crunch of leaves under his feet as he left the portal behind and headed deeper into the woodland. This was not a familiar wood, and Pickle grew increasingly concerned as the trees seemed to get closer and closer to him. Hearing the sounds of conversation in a nearby clearing, he crept to a bush to listen to what was being said. Looking through the bushes, Pickle could make out three creatures. Two of them he recognised as goblins. The other was human, and seemed to be the leader of the group.

"Grippa, Rhark," said the man. "His Fearship has entrusted us to find that meddling elf and clap him in irons!"

The man laughed, which being a nasally sound, echoed round the clearing. Pickle, realising that they were talking about him, took a step backward, sticking his foot through a large branch and making a huge crack that echoed round the forest. As Pickle turned to flee, a muscular arm appeared over the bush and dragged him into the clearing.

**Is Pickle's Dungeon-saving mission over before it has even begun?
Read the next chapter of this adventure next time to find out.**

CLASSIC QUEST

Series 2

Quest: The Sword.

Dungeoneer: Neil Payne.

Advisors: Mark, Jason and Craig.

Home town: Newark-on-Trent, Nottinghamshire.

Team score: 5 out of 10.

You already know how much I despair at the sheer stupidity surrounding Neil's death but, on the whole, this wasn't actually a bad team, although they undoubtedly were helped along here and there by the production team.

Level One: Neil manages to pull the lever at the Wheel of Fate, which takes him to a room with four doors that are decorated with the symbols of the Sword, the Cup and the Shield, as well as a Fire Exit. Folly is on hand to explain that the team must choose the object of their quest (the one and only time a team gets to do this prior to series 4). The jester suggests to Neil that he should follow the Sword and, if he does, to look out for a red king. Neil does follow the Sword, and he immediately has to hurry past a slithering snake, which emerges from behind a ruined doorway. Food is spied in a bomb room, but there is no time to collect it before the fuse burns away, so it has to be abandoned.

The level one clue room follows, where Neil is able to restore his life force at last. Granitas is on guard, and seemingly feeling particularly sensitive about his name. Despite the team scoring only one out of three, Granitas gives them a clue about which object they need to take and what to do with it: "*The dagger may be used, but not against flesh.*" - *Granitas*. As well as the dagger, Neil picks up a potion, rejecting a bone. The next challenge is to Pick a Card, where Folly's clue comes in handy, as Neil is able to unlock the door that is being blocked by the King of Diamonds. In Mildread's cave, Neil parts with the potion, although the loathsome old witch is adamant that she would rather have had a bone!

Mildread gives the team a clue - the word *stalactite*. In fact, this is a complete red herring, but the advisors keep on trying to find a use for it right up to their final scene! In the final chamber of the level, a cavernwraith is guarding the wellway. Having no flesh, the ghost is defeated by the dagger, and disappears when Neil holds the weapon up.

Neil is then able to descend to level two via the wellway.

Level Two: The first challenge for the team is to choose a path to follow in the room with five doors that used to contain the Moving Keyhole. Many quests are on display, including Mark's in the shape of Gretel, but they sensibly decide to follow the Sword, as it is the object of their own quest. In the level two clue room, Neil picks up a large key from within the ribcage of a decapitated skeleton.

The Bridged Vale follows, where Mogdred is on hand to provide a bit of tension. The evil sorcerer obscures Neil with the spell SHROUD, and the advisors take a long time dispelling it, mainly because they obviously have no idea what the word means, and try to dispel without the letter O. After some serious prompting from Treguard, who is supposed to have been spell-trapped by Mogdred, they finally manage to dispel SHROUD and continue on their way. (However, this somewhat incompetent attempt to deal with magic portends a much costlier mistake later on.) Neil next finds himself in Ariadne's lair, where he picks up a piece of the Sword before the giant spider arrives and chases him out. Combat Chess follows, which the team manage to complete fairly easily, although they are directed on the right track with the help of a strategically placed energy tree.

A quick jaunt through the new and improved Hall of Spears leads to Merlin's study, where Neil has to open a bottle in order to call a tiny Merlin from another astral plane, and then the advisors have to talk Merlin down to earth, as he is seemingly having a bit of trouble bridging the dimensional gap. No more surprises follow in this scene, however, as Merlin sets his customary three questions, of which the team manage to answer two correctly. Merlin has no magic to offer this time, but rather a clue about the correct path to take in the Corridor of the Catacombs. Neil uses the key to deal with a large golden keyhole that is blocking the large exit from Merlin's study, before arriving in the Dwarf's goldmine. The Dwarf asks Neil three fairly simple questions about his race, but the team only just manage to scrape one correct answer. However, the Dwarf is obviously feeling generous, and rewards them with a spell called SHOVEL - that's right, SHOVEL!

A green-lit Corridor of the Catacombs follows, where the team follow Merlin's advice and escape from a toadadile through the left-hand door. This leads to the wellway chamber, where Cedric is on guard. The mad

monk is in no mood for riddling today, and demands the password. It turns out not to be *stalactite* - surprise, surprise - so the team work out that they have to use the spell that the Dwarf has given them. A brilliant deduction, I'm sure you'll agree, but for some unknown, unfathomable and unwise reason, they decide to spellcast SPADE. Well, why not? Oh, I'll tell you why not - the spell's called SHOVEL, numbskulls!

Of course, the magic does not work, no matter how many times the advisors spellcast the wrong word, so Cedric is only too happy to conk Neil on the head and bring a painful and abrupt end to his quest. As Treguard points out, the team have blundered badly and paid the ultimate price: "*The spell you were given was SHOVEL, not SPADE. How would you like someone to get your name wrong?*" - *Treguard*.

Summary: A fair attempt and almost a level three performance, although their slightly haphazard style and often dodgy brainwork was bound to let them down in the end. (Incidentally, if you really want to know what I think of Neil and his friends, take the name of their home town, without the -on-Trent bit, rearrange the letters and stick an S on the end.)

REMEMBER HIM?

Series 7. Level 1/2.

FIDJIT

Be warned - I am slightly prejudiced against Fidjit, as he was the intended replacement for Motley, one of my favourite characters, and I really do feel that Knightmare would have been better off if he'd never existed at all. Having said that, I really have nothing against Fidjit, particularly - I just think he should have been Motley, that's all. Paul Valentine, of course, played Fidjit, in addition to Sylvester Hands in this particular series, meaning that Paul Valentine is the only Knightmare actor to appear in a series of Knightmare not playing at least one of the characters he had played during his first series.

Fidjit was a thief and locksmith, and his accent suggested that he came from Yorkshire. Lord Fear found Fidjit's presence in the Dungeon somewhat irksome, as he went around picking the locks at the ends of levels. This habit of Fidjit's could be quite useful to dungeoneers, although the gruff, short-tempered thief was by no means a member of the Powers that Be, and would help dungeoneers only if they helped him first. Like Motley, he had a tentative romance going on with Sidriss, although in this case, Sidriss was the one who seemed keener on pursuing the relationship, unlike her troublesome liaison with the absent, lovelorn jester.

Perhaps Fidjit's best appearance, and certainly his longest, was with Alex, the third dungeoneer of the series. Fidjit had been transformed into a giant toad (possibly by Sidriss, and for reasons never adequately explained) and he tasked Alex with finding a spell to turn him back. Alex's RESTORE spell did the job, and Fidjit showed his gratitude by accompanying the dungeoneer to the end of level one and opening the door to Smirkenorff, which was a gesture he repeated later in the series when dungeoneer Ben released him from a pillory.

Fidjit's final appearance was with Barry in level two, although he did not really get to engage in any banter with the notorious Smart Bottom, and was really only on hand to unlock the door to the Fire Room. Maybe the character was slightly underused in the series, but the production team obviously decided (very wisely, if you ask me) to drop Fidjit for series 8 and bring back Motley, which was a very welcome development. Still, as I

say, there was nothing really wrong with Fidgit - he's just a completely forgettable character, and one that probably shouldn't even have existed in the first place!

Fear Factor: 3 Very gruff and grumpy, but obviously not a real threat.

Killer Instinct: 1 I don't think he was bothered either way, really.

Humour Rating: 2 Only joked with himself, never with dungeoneers.

Oscar Standard: 6 Well, he did the accent and he said the lines, but Paul Valentine never really looked very comfortable in the role.

IF MY MEMORY SERVES ME TRUE...

By Jake Collins

As I am sure you have gleaned whilst reading The Eye Shield at some point during the last seven years, I was one of the four to five million viewers who was watching Knightmare every week during its original run on CITV. From 1987 to 1994, from the first episode to the last, I allowed nothing in the world to cause me to miss Knightmare at any cost! I shall be harping on about some more of my *Knightmare Night* memories in the next issue, in an attempt to recreate some of that magical Friday evening atmosphere for you, but for now I am turning my attention to those heady, long-distant days of the late 1980s, when I was watching Knightmare series 1, 2 and 3. I was not, however, recording them, as I did with series 4-8, and so my own "false memories" of Knightmare are solely concerned with the series 1-3 period. I have kept these memories to myself for almost twenty years, but now at last the time has come to share!

In March 1996, when I first rewatched some of series 1-3, I was surprised by how much I had actually remembered fairly accurately. Most of my vivid, accurate memories came from series 3, such as the exhilarating minecart ride, a dungeoneer turning into a floating star at one point (Simon II, as it turned out) and quite a lot of Martin's quest; I had no idea what the dungeoneer was called, but I remembered him turning into a skull ghost to escape from the Corridor of the Catacombs, being accosted by a hobgoblin in level three, meeting an incredibly large dragon and failing to earn a spell from him, and getting killed by a very evil sorceress (I thought it might have been Malice, although it turned out to be Morghanna) as a direct consequence of this. I also remembered that an episode had ended when Martin was at the end of the Cavern Range, almost in level three, and was being chased by several goblins. Yes, Martin's quest was definitely my most vivid memory from the first three series, which makes sense, I suppose, because it was at the very end of series 3 and it was very exciting!

To my mild surprise, I had also remembered the end of series 2 in some detail, specifically the episode that ends with Jamie (again, I didn't actually remember his name) walking out of Igneous's room, where temporal disruption occurs as the screen is filled with the red background for the life force sequence, as it is between all rooms in series 1 and 2. The next episode then begins back in Igneous's room, with

Jamie walking out of the door for a second time before he makes it to the next room. That could easily have been a false memory, but it turned out that it did actually happen, much to my delight.

I remembered very well the level two clue room from the first three series, and I always reckoned that if you arrived in there you had a pretty good chance of meeting a white ghost. And I was right, really, wasn't I? There are several cavernwraiths to be seen in this room during series 2, and these appearances obviously stuck with me, as did those of the Mills of Doom, although I believed (quite understandably, I think) that they were called the Wheels of Doom.

Okay, so that's what I did remember accurately, just for the record. Now I shall regale you with tales of things that (between 1990 and 1996) I would have sworn in court were true, but turned out to be either slightly wrong or woefully inaccurate. However, in most cases, I can understand why I remembered these things as I did, and I'll try to explain these reasons to you as best I can.

1) Wall Monsters:

My wall monster memories really used to epitomise series 1-3 for me - they were the one pervading factor that I associated with those early series. I used to find wall monster appearances both exciting and frightening. I'll admit now that I remember being convinced at one point that my own living room wall was going to sprout the face of Granitas at any moment, but please bear in mind that I was only four years old at the time and I was (as I still am now, in fact) the proud owner of a very lively imagination.

You may be wondering (although I wouldn't be surprised if you're not) why I was expecting Granitas to appear on the wall rather than Olgarth. The answer to this is that I never actually realised that the two wall monsters were different characters - to me, they were both Granitas, and that's how I remembered them! (You can see indisputable evidence of this on the Letters Page in TES issue 2, which is my first appearance in The Eye Shield.) I attribute this to the fact that Olgarth completely disappeared from series 1 after only the second episode, so by the time I'd managed to learn the name of the wall monster, there was only one name to learn - Granitas!

I remembered the individual details of the wall monsters' rooms (doors,

windows etc) fairly well, although I completely forgot about the bricked-up door in Granitas's room. This I attribute to the fact that the door was not present in series 3, when the room was occupied by Golgarach. I was well aware of (and not very happy about, it has to be said) the fact that Golgarach had stolen Granitas's room from him, and seeing as my overriding memories were from series 3, the bricked-off door just got lost in transit. One thing I completely made up, though, was the erroneous notion that exiting the Igneous/Brangwen chamber through the left-hand door would always take you into Ariadne's lair - only one dungeoneer (Anthony) ever actually went through this door, and he certainly did not meet the Queen of Arachnids on the other side!

Speaking of Igneous's room, I am still rather proud of myself for spotting the fact that a wall monster was about to appear when I first saw the chamber, which must have been whilst I was watching the first episode of series 2. I always thought of wall monster walls as "squashy", presumably because of the texture of the masks, and although the walls weren't nearly as squashy as I remembered, it can be seen very clearly that there is a difference in texture between Igneous's flat, smooth wall and the two stony, bumpy walls on either side. Yes, much as I hate to boast about it, little five-year-old me knew Igneous was on his way for several seconds before he actually appeared - I'm not ashamed to admit that this is probably the single greatest achievement of my entire life!

While we're on the subject of Igneous, this particular wall monster is the source of another of my mistaken memories - I thought he was called Icarus! Obviously after singeing his wings whilst flying too close to the sun, the poor chap had decided to retreat into a wall for the rest of his life - well, why not? Evidently Igneous is a far more suitable name for a wall monster, just like Granitas, although I've never really understood the "rocky" connection to the name Olgarth - can anyone enlighten me?

Also in the name department, I remembered that Granitas and Igneous introduced themselves by name before setting their three questions, but I was convinced that they said "of the Dungeon" rather than "of Legend". I actually think my statement is wholly more accurate, as I don't think there really is a legend featuring Olgarth, Granitas or Igneous. Icarus would be another matter, of course, but there isn't really a wall monster called Icarus!

As a big fan of wall monsters, I remembered that a large blue one had

taken over from Granitas in series 3, while a kind of Egyptian goddess had taken over from Igneous. I've always resented Golgarach and Brangwen to some extent for ousting two of my favourite Knightmare characters, but as time has passed, I've learned to forgive them.

2) Goblins, skull ghosts and the Armoured Behemoth:

Seeing as these creatures were featured in abundance in series 3, I was convinced that they had all featured in series 1 and 2 as well! This was, of course, due to the warping of my memories of the first two series by the fact that these "original" creatures were also featured in series 4, along with the original life force clock and Merlin, both of which I knew had been around since the beginning. I used to think that series 4 really was quite similar to series 1-3 (blasphemy, I know, but there it is) and I was quite surprised to see the marked differences in style and length of gameplay when I first rewatched episodes from the first three series.

3) Merlin and his magical rooms:

Merlin was always one of my favourite characters, in addition to the wall monsters, and I'm still very disappointed that he disappeared after series 4. I always remembered that he was in series 1, 2 and 3, but I thought he used to wear purple robes, and the green ones were new for series 4! Oh dear, how wrong I was. I attribute this misconception to the fact that Merlin's study itself in series 1 and 2 was very purple, as well as the fact that I used to associate an illustration of the Magician from the *Puddle Lane* books (who did wear purple robes) with what I thought Merlin had looked like in the early series.

I always used to be very pleased when a dungeoneer popped up in one of Merlin's magical rooms, as it meant that an appearance by the white-bearded wizard himself was imminent. I used to be convinced, however, that Merlin's "step" room was actually in series 2 rather than series 3, although I had no idea how the teams managed to make the path appear across that huge gap in the floor! This is simply a case of misremembering the early series by over-relying on my memories of series 3, which is a phenomenon that also led me to believe that Treguard's most famous costume, which he wore during series 3, 4, 5 and 6, first appeared in series 2. I remembered that he had worn a different costume in the early days, but I thought it was just in series 1. This is a very small thing, really, but I thought it was worth a quick mention!

4) The ends of series 1 and 3:

I knew that I had always enjoyed Treguard's little speeches at the end of each series, which is why it still rankles with me to this day that he didn't do one at the end of series 8! I had no idea what he'd said to us at the end of series 2, but I thought I knew all about what he'd said at the end of series 1 and 3. Series 1, I thought, had ended with Treguard saying "*Knightmare will return*", putting a great deal of emphasis on the word *will*. What he actually said was, "When the fire burns, the *Knightmare* returns" so I guess I wasn't too far off, really, was I?

At the end of series 3, I was sure Treguard had mentioned something about *Knightmare* coming back after Christmas. Now, you don't need three guesses where I got that idea, do you? From the end of series 4, of course! I've only fairly recently realised just how much a lot of *Knightmare* fans hate this festive ending to the fourth series, and I realise now that such an ending would never, ever have been permitted to close out the Ultimate *Knightmare* Series, series 3!

5) Mrs Grimwold and her kitchen:

As I mentioned earlier, I remembered some aspects of series 3 fairly well, and one of those aspects was the Grimwolds. I remembered that Mr Grimwold was an ogre and that he'd killed one dungeoneer (Kelly, as it turned out) and I remembered that Mrs Grimwold was an old witch who could often be found in the level one wellway room. I did not, however, remember Festus, which I find quite surprising when I stop and think about how integral the savage pet was to all but one of Mrs Grimwold's scenes.

Anyway, I did remember that someone in series 3 had uttered the immortal line, "Mrs Grimwold, she doesn't like people in her kitchen, and Mr Grimwold, he just doesn't like people!" I was absolutely convinced that Motley had said this, although in fact it was Mellisandre. I didn't even remember that Mellie was in series 3 until I rewatched it, but I did remember Motley. I also remembered that he had replaced a green-and-red jester from series 1 and 2, although I didn't rediscover his name (Folly, in case you didn't know) until I bought and read the first *Knightmare* book in 1993.

6) Series 4 mystery wellway room:

Did I say that all my mistaken memories came from the first three series? I lied! As you know, I recorded *Knightmare* as I watched it from series 4 onwards, but we had only had our brand-new VCR for about three

weeks when series 4 began, and consequently none of us was exactly infallible at working the damned thing! As a consequence, we didn't actually manage to record the second episode of series 4, as the VCR was tuned in to BBC2 instead of ITV. Disaster! From this point on, we always watched Knightmare through the video channel, just to make absolutely sure that it was actually recording!

I actually remembered what happened during this missing episode in great detail (Helen meeting Fatilla, releasing Merlin from the stocks, answering a riddle from Brother Mace and getting a spell to use against Ariadne etc) but there was one thing that I misremembered, and that was the nature of the wellway room. I remembered that the Armoured Behemoth was in there and that Helen used the Dagger of Darkness in order to flummox him, but I was convinced (at least, I managed to convince myself) that the wellway room used was the same one from series 1-3, despite the fact that it never appeared again throughout the rest of the series.

When Paul McIntosh supplied me with the missing episode in 1996, I was put right in a somewhat cruel and jarring manner. I always used to look out for rooms in each series that had been carried over from the series before, and I wanted that wellway room to be the same one as in the first three series so much that I actually managed to convince myself that it had been! Of course, once I had seen the episode again, I could not deny the awful truth any longer - there are no rooms whatsoever that are common to series 3 and 4, and these are the only two consecutive series where this is the case! To this day, I try to console myself with the fact that the Spindizzy is in both of them, but it's in different rooms, more's the pity!

And there we have it - a few of my mistaken memories. If you have some you'd like to share with other TES readers, why not e-mail them to me?

KNIGHTMARE LOCATIONS

Bodiam Castle, Hastings, East Sussex

Bodiam Castle. Vital Statistics:

Location: Bodiam, near Hastings, East Sussex.

Century of Origin: 14th.

Also Known As: Various Dungeon rooms new to series 5.

Series featured in: 5, 6 and 7.

These pictures were taken by me, Jake Collins, and scanned by Rosey Collins, in October 2006.

This room was seen many times in series 5. Skarkill hid behind some rocks in here and jumped out on Chris.



The two photos below formed part of an eye shield sequence in series 5. One of Ben's advisors described these surroundings (rather inaccurately) as "the castle foundations" even though they are clearly open to the air!



Next Issue: A Dungeoneer's Journey.

PUZZLE PAGE TWO

Knightmare Family Fortunes II

All the questions below have several possible answers, each one of which is worth a different number of points. Play this with a friend, and come up with one answer each for each question. (If you have no friends, come up with two answers for each question yourself.) Check your answers at the bottom of the page, and then add up your score. If, between you, you manage to score two hundred points, you win five thousand pounds! If, in addition to this, you come up with all five top answers, you win a car as well! Good luck.

(Please note: All prizes are symbolic and do not actually exist.)

- 1.) Name a Knightmare dragon.
- 2.) Name a Knightmare elf.
- 3.) Name a Knightmare character played by Paul Valentine.
- 4.) Name a Knightmare series featuring both Lord Fear and Motley.
- 5.) Name a Knightmare character beginning with G.

OUR SURVEY SAID...

- 1.) **Smirkenorff (TOP ANSWER! 30 points.)** Bhal-Shebah (20 points.) Owen (20 points.) Red Death (10 points.) Snapper (10 points.) Bealwit (5 points.) Talionis (5 points.)
- 2.) **Pickle (TOP ANSWER! 30 points.)** Elita (20 points.) Velda. (10 points.) Arawn or any of his knights (5 points.)
- 3.) **Motley (TOP ANSWER! 30 points.)** Sylvester Hands (20 points.) Fidjit (10 points.) Ferryman (5 points.)
- 4.) **Series 8 (TOP ANSWER! 30 points.)** Series 5 (15 points.) Series 6 (15 points.)
- 5.) **Granitas (TOP ANSWER! 30 points.)** Greystagg (20 points.) Gumboil (20 points.) Gwendoline (10 points.) Gretel (10 points.) Gatemaster (10 points.) Grimaldine (10 points.) Golgarach (10 points.) Gundrada (10 points.) Gibbet (10 points.) Giant (5 points.) Grippa (5 points.) Grimwold (5 points.)

THOSE KNIGHTMARE NIGHTS: The Preludes

Ah yes, those Knightmare nights - the sky was dark, the wind was cold and the weather was often inclement, yet all those wintry Friday evenings needed to brighten them up no end was Knightmare! For me, a brand new episode of Knightmare was the perfect way to round off the week, and I am sure I will never find anything else to rival that Friday feeling.

However, what made the experience even more wonderful for me was the fact that Knightmare was often preceded by several other shows that I very much enjoyed. Of course, none of them could even begin to rival Knightmare in any way, and I did not anticipate them with the same unerring eagerness throughout the week, but I did often find that Friday was the best day of the week on CITV, and to have such a televisual feast topped off by Knightmare itself was pure heaven!

The following shows are the ones that I remember thinking of as preludes to Knightmare - they were all very enjoyable shows in their own right, but the fact that I was watching them also meant that Knightmare was on the way, which was the most wonderful feeling in the world.

Scooby-Doo

This old chestnut was on shortly before every single episode of Knightmare, or so it seemed to me! I've never been a huge fan of Scooby-Doo, but it's a fun show, and it did serve as a nice warm-up for Knightmare, what with the obvious supernatural element. (Of course, the ghosts and monsters were always people in costumes, but what the hell?) I always liked Scooby's nephew Scrappy, although it seems that no one else in the world ever did, particularly not the people who made the more recent movie adaptations!

The Raggy Dolls

This was on before series 5, and even though it was an old favourite by this time, watching it as a prelude to Knightmare increased my enjoyment of the cartoon no end! There is a very positive message in The Raggy Dolls, which we should all take to heart - it's not what you're like on the outside, but who you are on the inside that counts. (Or, alternatively, if you're a freak then you have to live in the bin with all the other freaks!) The Raggy Doll consortium comprised Dotty, who had been splashed with blue paint, Princess, whose clothes were too tatty, Lucy, whose limbs tended to fall off at awkward moments, Claude, who should have been

shipped to France, Hi-Fi, who had a rather bad stutter, Back-to-Front, who was back-to-front, and Sadsack, who was a teddy bear that had gone horribly wrong.

Victor and Hugo

This highly amusing cartoon from Cosgrove-Hall, which had previously given us Dangermouse and Count Duckula, followed the misadventures of two inept thieves, as they desperately tried (and continually failed) to carry out a successful crime. Victor's meticulous plans always ensured (in theory, at least) that nothing could go wrong, and yet it always did. This was actually a spin-off from Count Duckula, as it transformed semi-regular antagonists Gaston and Pierre from birds into humans, although the basic characters were exactly the same. Victor and Hugo aired just before Knightmare series 5 and 6.

Astro Farm

This fun piece of claymation preceded series 6, 7 and 8, although it was always on quite early in the CITV schedule. It also had three further series after Knightmare ended, but we mustn't hold that against it. Maintaining a successful farm on an asteroid in outer space was no easy task, yet Tom and his parents did a fine job of it, despite occasional hindrance from the Gorps, Splodge and Biff. Astro Farm was mainly arable, it appeared, yet there were a few animals as well - a large pink cow, Daisy, who could produce many flavours of milk, a large group of chickens called the Clucks, which laid blue eggs, and Dinko, the farm dog.

Alphabet Castle

This one was firmly aimed at the kiddies, and was on at about three-thirty, yet I thought it was a rather fun way to kill a bit of time before Knightmare series 7. Alphabet Castle was inhabited by old King Alpha and young Queen Bet; each week, one of them would receive a visitor to the castle (played by the actor that played the other one, if you see what I mean) and together they would learn about one letter of the alphabet - unsurprisingly, the first series had twenty-six episodes. There were several subsequent series, in which King Alpha and Queen Bet actually appeared together, but I don't think they were nearly as good as the first. By far my favourite character was Gobbledygook, the animated tongue-tied turkey.

The Legends of Treasure Island

Time to fess up - I may not actually have bothered watching this cartoon

if it had not directly preceded Knightmare series 7, but it did, so I watched it religiously. It was based (somewhat loosely) on the novel by Robert Louis Stevenson, and featured Dawn French and Hugh Laurie having a bit of fun with their voice talents. All the characters were anthropomorphic animals - Long John Silver was a fox, Squire Trelawney was a ridiculously large and pompous pigeon, and Jim Hawkins was some kind of grey dog. Of course, as is generally required with these adaptations, Jim acquired himself a foxy girlfriend, a fiery young vixen named Jane. A second series of this show (featuring a vastly improved theme tune and the additional voice talents of Chris Barrie) aired over a year later, during 1995, which was after Knightmare's demise. However, I still watched the show, just to see what happened. The answer: not much!

The Spooks of Bottle Bay

Conversely, this was a brilliant show, and watching it as a prelude to Knightmare only added to its already superior status. From the people who brought us Button Moon (and later Roger and the Rottentrolls, then Ripley and Scuff) The Spooks of Bottle Bay was a tremendously entertaining puppet show, which I know I've mentioned in TES before. The spooks (Fred, Sally, Tommy, Daffy and Baby) did their best to help Sid Sludge impress the fair Brenda Drain, as well as stop the evil estate agents Sybil and Cedric Sludge from carrying out their underhand deeds in Bottle Bay, and much hilarity always ensued. The Spooks of Bottle Bay had three excellent series, although only the second actually served as a prelude to Knightmare. The first series was on in 1993, but it aired on Thursdays. However, it moved to Fridays in 1994, serving as a nice lead-in to Knightmare series 8 - I can remember motoring home from secondary school (during my first term there) in order to be in time for The Spooks of Bottle Bay, which was on at twenty-to-four. The third series was also on Fridays, but Knightmare had gone by then. Still, let's not dwell on that...

So, there we have it - a few of my favourite Knightmare preludes. Why don't you write and tell me how you used to kill the hour-and-a-quarter-or-so between the end of school and the start of the world's greatest television programme? I'd be thrilled to share with the other readers your Knightmare preludes!

DUNGEONEER DWELLINGS

Series 8



POETRY CORNER

We journey back to series 4 once again to join Vicky and her intrepid band of suspected Amazons as they try (and fail) to conquer the Dungeon.

From just a few a miles down the road,
Vicky's in adventure mode.
With the drawbridge set in motion,
Hordriss said to find his potion.
Past assassin in the woods,
To Oakley they then gave the goods.
Necklace calmed the ogre's bellow,
Key then made Fatilla mellow.
Down the well, in level two,
Gundrada might well bisect you!
Mells was rescued from the stocks,
But Merlin's riddles proved to fox.
Meaning one thing, saying it not,
The team was soon in quite a spot!
Vital magic was withheld,
The Dungeon bell soonafter knelled.

SCANDINAVIAN KNIGHTMARES

Jón Þórsteinn Petúrssón, February 2008

Ever wondered what a particularly badly behaved black metal band from some pissant town in Norway would get up to if unleashed upon a popular British kids' TV programme? Wonder no longer. On a strictly once-and-once-only basis, the boys of *Scandinavian Winters* – well, four of them – get to invade the swords-and-goblins fantasy world of *Knightmare*. Expect the Greater Game to be played with a flagrant disregard for the rules, the fourth wall to be reduced to rubble and a trail of destruction to be left in their wake.

Before we start, here is the **INTRODUCTORY DISCLAIMER** for our more sensitive readers: despite the apparent timelessness of this not-so-short story, it is part of an existing series, which has so far contained graphic depictions of extreme alcoholism, drug use, violence, theft, martial arts, animal torture, institutionalisation, church arson, abduction, sodomy, bizarre fetishes, underage sex, fascism, murder, cannibalism... and Cradle of Filth. And all to a soundtrack of the grimmest, coldest True Norwegian Black Metal. Anyone who is still unsure what that entails should read the (amazingly non-sensationalised) Wikipedia article at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_metal and in particular the "History of..." section. (However, under no circumstances should you go on to read *Lords Of Chaos*, which is an infuriatingly biased account of the scene written by a notorious American fascist.) Please be assured that any references to any of the slightly controversial subjects mentioned above do not reflect the opinions or beliefs of the author of this piece or the editor of The Eye Shield fanzine, but are used for purely literary purposes to reflect the purely fictional opinions and/or beliefs of the purely (well, mostly purely) fictional characters. **YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!**

You're all still reading? Marvellous. For the uninitiated who will not be familiar with the external characters competing in this phase of the Dungeon, and their role in the band back home, here is the round-up...

Dungeoneer: Gunnar Nordstrøm (lonesome wolf-howls): the youngest of the bunch by some considerable margin, usually seen with his hair in braids due to his father wanting a daughter a bit too much; confusing gender issues have left him still scared of girls even at this stage. Usually retreats into a bizarre fantasy world involving more Tolkien than is healthy.

Advisor: Xander Heifurstrand (axewielder-in-chief): impossibly blonde and bad-tempered college dropout with a penchant for animal torture, sexual deviancy, far-right politics and appalling processed foods. Would get on just fine with Elita, if she had any hair to hang on to.

Advisor: Håkon Bårdsen (axewielder extraordinaire): tall, brash, vain poser with an eye for the ladies and a well-toned six-pack (plus 33% extra free), known for posing heroically and shouting in a dramatic voice; only his ultra-pagan beliefs save him from being as far from the dogma of black metal as it's possible to get. Never removes his sunglasses unless on stage. Has a girlfriend called Helga who sports acne scars, bright orange hair and a complete absence of any cleavage.

Advisor: Øyvind Henriksen (diabolical thunderclaps of rage): very tall, stick-thin,

generously bearded, with a permanently foul mood and overwhelming hatred of everything and everyone. Think of the worst parts of Cedric, Gibbet, Igneous and the bomb rooms distilled into one seething mass of crushing negativity.

And the two who missed out...

Per-Erik Nordstrøm (voices of the condemned): Gunnar's older brother. Dipsomaniac martial arts would-be-expert with the voice of an unoiled door hinge who could take on Sylvester Hands and Brother Mace in a drinking contest and win, even if 50-year-old Etruscan brandy was involved. Considered too incoherent to be on the team but very useful for the after-show party.

Ulrik Svarstad (innard-massaging subsonics): wide, hairy of body and head, immensely strong, but as thick as one short plank with a terminal case of woodworm. Might outwit a troll on a good day. Left out of the team for obvious IQ-related reasons.

And now, time turns, the fire burns, timeout is gone, the quest is on...

***** PROLOGUE *****

"What? What's that noise?"

Treguard woke to find himself still sitting in the chair in his antechamber that had served him so well during the eight years of *Knightmare*. The floor was shaking, and other than this the first thing he noticed was the fire burning next to him.

"Time turns, the fire burns!" exclaimed Treguard. "At last, it must be a new phase of the Dungeon! Majida! ...MAJIDA!"

But Majida did not hear his call. After the final quest she had retreated into her bottle for a bit more than six and one-half days, and Treguard had mistakenly left that bottle outside where the milkman had collected it. Majida was, by now, reluctantly employed at Wolfenden Dairy, about ten miles down the road, where her mock somewhere-around-the-Mediterranean accent was fooling nobody.

Frustrated, Treguard called in vain. "Pickle!" But Pickle did not hear his call. He had long since departed to frolic and skip through the forest with the other elves and make occasional appearances on British TV game shows involving extremely camp hosts, where he would no doubt feel entirely at home.

"Merlin! Hordriss! I don't care who it is... *Sidriss*, even you'll do, if you're out there, somebody, give me a hand!"

Soon enough, Treguard realised he was on his own again, as he was always supposed to be. He looked round his antechamber to see everything exactly where it had been left at the end of series three. Staring into the monitor disguised as a treasure chest which the advisors would look through, he saw the Dungeon changing shape before him. As the rooms scrolled past, for the most part it resembled a series two Dungeon, but several anomalies were present. One of these was in the antechamber itself; the magic mirror from series four was on the wall, but seemed to have lost its magic. As the castle-quake subsided, Treguard looked in the mirror to see what appeared to be Merlin staring back at him.

"Dragon's breath!" howled Treguard, giving himself the piercing stare he was famous for. "I know it's been a long time since the last quest, but this is ridiculous... spellcasting, H-A-I-R-C-U-T!"

A jangly spell noise sounded – that's the proper jangly spell noise from the first two series – and some magic scissors appeared, complete with the twangy noises which usually accompanied a haunted sword. The scissors duly cut Treguard's hair and beard down to the length he'd left them at the end of series two. What remained of his hair, though, was still a distinct shade of grey.

"Spellcasting," he declared. "G-R-E-C-I-A-N-2-0-0-0!"

With another jangly spell noise, Treguard's hair was restored to a deep brown which made him look 25 years younger.

"Perfect!" he declared. "Now nobody will be any the wiser, even that know-it-all Hordriss. Spellcasting, B-R-O-O-M." A further jangly spell noise sounded, and a magic broom appeared, sweeping away the pile of grey hair that would have given the game away. "Now, time to get the Greater Game started. Enter, stranger!"

With a loud wind-whipping noise, a boy appeared. At least Treguard assumed he was male when he spoke, although he had a huge fringe and incredibly long hair tied up in a plait at the back.

"Who challenges my Dungeon?" asked Treguard.

"Gunnar Nordstrøm, from Noholm, Norway," replied the boy in a powerful Norwegian accent.

"Well, waste no time here, call your advisors," Treguard told him.

"Xander, Håkon, Øyvind, come!"

Three further boys appeared, with more hair between them than a whole band of trolls. Treguard looked at them suspiciously. They all looked far too old to be appearing here, and one had a huge beard that would have put Merlin to shame.

"Who guides this dungeoneer?"

On the left sat the one with the bony face and almost bleached-blonde hair.

"Alexander Heifurstrand, from Noholm, Norway."

The one on the middle with the huge muscles and sunglasses spoke next. "Håkon Bårdsen from Noholm, Norway."

Finally, the bearded one growled. "Øyvind Henriksen from Noholm, Norway."

"Such old heads on young bodies," remarked Treguard. "Surely *too* old to be here?"

"What are you talking about?" grunted Øyvind, "I'm sixteen, as are these two beside me. If you're commenting on my beard, I will remind you we're from Norway. We are the descendants of the Vikings. We grow up and grow facial hair far faster than any other race in this world."

"The greatest..." Xander interrupted, and was silenced by a sharp jab in the ribs from Håkon.

Treguard brandished the quest items. "Here is the Helmet of Justice, which blinds you to the way ahead..."

"Nice design!" boomed Håkon. "See, I always said the Vikings should have had horned helmets." It was, of course, the original helmet; the second, with its plaited pony-tail design, would have been highly inappropriate for a Norwegian team, not to mention far too cruel on Gunnar.

"And a knapsack for food, which you should use to sustain your life force..."

"Yes, I know!" interrupted Gunnar. "I've seen this show before, you know. Don't tell me, place only food in it, on condition red we are in grave peril, and the only way is onward, there is no turning back... now, where's the Dungeon? The sooner we get started, the sooner we can all go down the p..." He stopped before he could blow his cover.

Treguard looked annoyed. "You have forgotten the eye shield!" he growled. "Take it,

so your advisors can make use of some extra vision. Now, where did I put it..."

"If you remember," said Gunnar, "it turned into the Shield of Justice at the end of series seven."

"I will remind you that we had another phase of the Dungeon after that one," Treguard replied.

"Discworld logic!" said Gunnar. "The more you believe in something, the more it becomes real. The converse is also true; I believed series eight was a bad dream... a nightmare, if you will... and I believed it so much that now series eight no longer exists. Go and look in the Hall of Fame if you don't believe me."

Treguard briefly disappeared. A loud cry of "Dragon's breath!" for the second time in as many minutes confirmed the existence of only seven pictures in the Hall of Fame and Barry Thorne's face staring out from the most recent. Irked by the near-unbelievable erasure of his one attempt at techno-magic as well as the memory of Screeching Gideon, Treguard waved Gunnar into the Dungeon.

***** LEVEL ONE *****

Gunnar uttered the immortal words. "Where am I?"

Right on cue, Håkon completed the obvious response. "You're in a room." He paused. "Yes, there's more, but I just wanted to stop my sentence there. The room is blue, there are four doors in front of you, and absolutely none of them look in any way interesting."

As portcullises crashed over the two doors at the side nearest to Gunnar, Folly jumped out from behind one of them, dancing around in that way that he does.

"Wooooohooohooohooohoo! Wooooohahahahahaha!" shrieked Folly. "Folly by name, folly by nature..." Øyvind already had a scowl of pure murderous rage emblazoned across his face, and the quest was not even a minute old. Treguard's face appeared in the wall, between the two far doors.

"Folly!" howled the Dungeon Master. "Enough! Don't hinder the team, you're wasting their life force!"

"Yes master, sorry master," Folly whimpered. "Hello, dungeoneer! What's your name, then?"

"Gunnar..."

"Gunnar? That's a bit of a silly name, if you ask me. Wooooohooohooohooohooohoo!"

"FOLLY!" growled Treguard. "Get on with it!"

"All right, master, as you wish... now, Gunnar, here's my clue. Do you know what it is?" Folly showed Gunnar a small object that the advisors could not make out on the screen.

"Despite this helmet, I'm not completely blind," grumbled Gunnar. "It's a music box."

"A magical music box, actually," Folly corrected him. "All you have to do is turn the handle and you'll get your clue. Take the wrong door and there might be a nasty surprise waiting for you... wooooooooohahahahahahahahaha!"

With this final shriek, Folly disappeared, much to the relief of everyone involved. Gunnar wasted no time in turning the handle on the music box. The sound of Entombed was heard, loud and clear. It was a riff from their first album. The advisors muttered to each other in Norwegian.

"*Left Hand Path!*" howled Håkon. "Gunnar, you need to take the left hand path. Sidestep to your right, and again, and again... walk forwards..."

"Where am I?"

"Hold your horses, Gunnar, it's the level one clue room. The one with the chequered floor. Can you see the table from there?"

"Just about..."

"Right, walk up to it..." Gunnar did as he was told, and made his way round so the others could see. The table contained a bar of gold, a bag of herbs, an uncooked stick of broccoli, and a large hammer that looked suspiciously like it had come from the cover of a Manowar album. Tregaurd's face appeared in the corner of the room.

"You must find food here, for your life force is low," warned Tregaurd.

"But we've only just started!" protested Håkon. "All of one minute we spent dealing with that jester..." He looked at the screen to see the skull of condition red starting back at him, and instructed Gunnar to take the broccoli. Gunnar was disgusted.

"I'm surprised this isn't a danger to life force," grunted Gunnar indignantly. "I hate broccoli..."

"The rest of these objects must be earned; stand quite still, dungeoneer..."

The familiar groan which accompanied the appearance of a wall monster was heard.

"I am Granitas of Legend," boomed the wall monster. Gunnar, Håkon and Xander burst out laughing in unison. Such a thing as a laugh has never been witnessed by anyone on Øyvind's face.

"MY NAME IS NOT AMUSING!" barked Granitas. "Puny dungeoneer, stop laughing or you perish here!"

"Oh, yes it is, mate, yes it is..." said Gunnar, between sniggers. "You mean to say you didn't give yourself that name intentionally..."

"Do not question me or I feed on you! I ask the questions round here and truth I seek!" snarled Granitas.

"What are you going to do about it?" Gunnar asked him. "I'm over here by this table and you're trapped in that wall. Magic have you none, as you kept saying in the early days. I've not felt less threatened since I saw that Brollachan in series seven."

"What... how did you see this when *Knightmare* has never been shown on Norwegian TV?" asked Granitas, ever more confused by the situation.

"I bought some pirate DVDs off eBay," Gunnar answered. "A hundred kroner each they cost me – and they were all worth it, with the possible exception of series eight which no longer exists." The sound of a couple of thousand fingers on a couple of hundred keyboards typing their collective objection on the internet was audible in the background. However, no objection was forthcoming from Granitas, and Gunnar realised quickly that he could turn this to his advantage.

"Come on then..." he goaded at the stony apparition. "Truth accepted..."

"That was not one of my riddles!" snapped Granitas.

"Yes it was," Gunnar replied. "You asked me a question, I gave you the correct answer, now what is your second?"

"It never happened like this in the old days..." grumbled Granitas under whatever passed for breath in the wall monster anatomy. "Here is my second. Who was the first hobbit to hold the ring?"

Gunnar needed no prompting from the others. "Déagol!" he replied confidently.

"Falsehood!" boomed Granitas. "Bilbo Baggins was the truth I sought!"

"Now, you have got to be joking!" Gunnar replied.

"Do you question my years of knowledge?" Granitas growled. "They say the walls have ears and with *my* ears, much have I learned over the past thousand..."

"Didn't spend any of that time reading Tolkien, did you?" Gunnar challenged him. "Bilbo was 111 years old when he gave the ring to Frodo; however Gollum was already over 500 at the time. It was Déagol, of the Stoors, the southernmost of the hobbits, who found the ring that Isildur had dropped in the river; for his efforts to retrieve it he was murdered by his companion, Sméagol, who kept hold of it and spent the next half a millennium morphing into Gollum. The first hobbit to take the ring was Déagol. Now, what do you have to say for yourself..."

There was a brief but uneasy silence.

"Truth accepted..." mumbled Granitas, clearly reeling from the onslaught of Tolkien geekery. "How did you come to know so much about hobbits anyway?"

"Because I spend most of my free time reading Tolkien!" Gunnar answered. "You're taking on someone who can recite *The Silmarillion* word-for-word in three different languages. I've read *Lord Of The Rings* one hundred and thirty-seven times, in four different languages, and I even wrote corrections for the German version. And one day I'm going to honour Tolkien's memory by writing the sequel and everyone will think he's been resurrected. Now, I make that three truths in all... I command you!"

"What... how... what the..." stuttered Granitas, by now completely beaten. "Oh, very well. Your quest is for the Chalice, but you may not drink from it..."

"Never met my brother, have you?" interrupted Gunnar. "If he's within a hundred mile radius of this Dungeon, I think you'll find the chalice has been well and truly drunk from already. If there ever was anything to drink in there, it'll surely be empty now. If it's all the same to you, I'd prefer a quest for the Sword."

Granitas, resignedly, answered. "Fine! Your quest is for the Sword, yet you may not wield it. Now pick up the gold and the hammer and get out of my sight! Rock I was, and rock I now become..."

With a familiar groan, Granitas disappeared to have a sulk and hoped not to encounter a gloating Olgarth who would never let him forget his ordeal. Gunnar was guided expertly out of the room, holding the gold and the hammer.

***** END OF PART ONE *****